

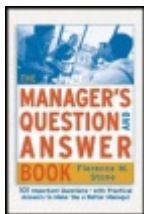
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The Manager's Questions and Answer Book

by Florence Stone ISBN:081440

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This book answers over 100 important and common management questions, tackling topics such as conflict management, recruitment and orientation, performance and stress management, political skills, and more.

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Back Cover

Sometimes a manager's job can seem overwhelming.

Managers need to set goals, communicate well, train and motivate people, appraise performance, and cope with sensitive policy issues. It's no wonder they have so many questions: "How do I challenge people who've lost their motivation?" "What do I do to increase productivity?" "How do I address questions about impending layoffs--when I know they're true? "How do I

deal with my own difficult boss?"

The Manager's Question and Answer Book answers over 100 of these common--and important--management questions. Tackling issues like conflict management, recruitment and orientation, performance and stress management, political skills, and others, the book gives readers the help they need to handle any situation.

Each question is addressed

with a brief answer for quick guidance, followed by a longer "tell me more" section, which provides a thorough analysis for those who seek more in-depth guidance. *The Manager's Question and Answer Book* is a crucial resource no manager can afford to be without.

About the Author

Florence Stone is a manager with the American Management Association, an experienced journalist, and the author of many books,

including *Coaching, Counseling
& Mentoring*.

The *Manager's* Question and Answer Book

Florence M. Stone

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*This book is dedicated to my family
and best friends.*

Introduction

If you've opened this book, you're probably a manager who wants to become more effective at overseeing the work of others. It doesn't matter whether you work for a small or a large organization, whether it's a public or a private business, whether you're on the lowest rung of the management ladder or the highest. You recognize how complex management is becoming today and how important your ability as a manager is for success in today's workplace. It doesn't matter how experienced you

are. You know your ability to get work done by others can always be improved.

That is the purpose of this book. The questions here reflect the information you need to be the best that you can be in your position. For more than thirty years, I have worked for the American Management Association, becoming a recognized authority on management and interpersonal communications. So managers come to me with questions regularly, and here I have assembled the most frequently asked questions and practical, hands-on answers to help

you excel in ten management skills. You can use this book in two ways. You can read it as you would any management book, discovering new information and adding to your existing knowledge, or you can use this book as a reference tool when problems arise on the job. The index and table of contents have been developed with just that purpose in mind. Every topic is clearly identified to help you find what you're looking for without searching through page after page to get the answer you need.

Either way you use this book, its contents should help you gain

confidence and decrease stress in your role as a manager and improve productivity and job satisfaction—your own and your employees'. It will also help you demonstrate the skills, abilities and knowledge that senior management at your organization expects of you, and grow professionally. As you rush from group meetings to one-on-one sessions with your workers to the inevitable crisis du jour, you don't want highfalutin' theory. Rather, you want practical answers to the daily problems you face and the cumulative pressures that come with your role. As author of this book, I

am assuming the role of a wise friend, offering realistic advice that will enable you to avoid pitfalls and sparing you from having to scramble for the information you need to handle the wide range of difficult situations that confront you.

With this book in your desk drawer, on your desk, or on your bookshelf, you will find your days are easier and the superhuman demands of your position within your capability.

The lists of questions are divided into ten chapters. If you think of it, effective and efficient management isn't just one skill but a collection of

skills, each chapter representing one of the skill areas. Together, they form a framework for management success.

For example, performance management, taken alone, is useless. One must be skilled in communication to provide constructive feedback and handle coaching and counseling interviews to get the best from employees. Appraisal interviews can trigger conflicts, and, besides good conflict-resolution skills, you need a sense of trust between your employees and you, trust that comes with a sense of teamwork. Teambuilding demands

that you hire the right people and motivate them to stay on. And given the time you spend in meetings, you need to know how to maximize the accomplishments of both operating and cross-functional meetings.

Together, these skills will make you a better leader, the touchstone of the superior manager.

Companies are demanding so much more of their managers, and managers are becoming so much more visible. As a manager in today's workplace, you must operate with optimum effectiveness and efficiency.

This book will help you do just that.

Chapter 1:

Communication

Management

1.1 When should I talk to employees in person, and when should I use written documents?

If the information is of a sensitive nature, a personal conversation is best. If it is called for, a one-on-one conversation will enable you to express your opinion tactfully and in a caring manner. Your voice can add an entire dimension of emotion that written words, even by the best of writers, cannot convey. If there is the likelihood of a misunderstanding, a one-on-one conversation or a group meeting makes it easier to eliminate

any misunderstandings before they arise. Any errors or confusions can also be resolved immediately.

If the message is so important that it demands immediate communication, you should probably walk over and sit down with the employee.

Other things it is important to do in person are introducing yourself to a new colleague, negotiating for resources, and brainstorming.

Tell Me More

When should you put something in

writing? You put a message in writing when:

- Legal or other formal documentation is needed.
- A written reprimand has to go into an employee's file.
- Time is critical. It is far faster for most people to read words than to listen to them.
- The subject is complicated and a misunderstanding will occur if it isn't in writing.
- Hard copy will be needed

sooner or later, either for distribution or for recordkeeping.

- The issue is one over which you want control. (By putting words to paper, you exert control over the issue from the beginning.)
- Multiple copies will need to go to people. You can e-mail or broadcast fax, rather than use paper, if it is a more efficient way to communicate to a large group.

- Your position needs to be put in writing to protect you. This is particularly so if you are in opposition to actions that others plan to take.

A written memo might follow a rejection, for example, of an employee's request for a transfer. Rather than get immediately to the bad news, you might begin, "Michael, I'm responding to your request that we consider you for the opening in the communications office in San Viejo." This neutral opening and matter-of-fact tone set the stage for the news: "I am afraid that we need you in our office in New

York City. I understand how disappointing this may be." If the situation might change in the employee's favor, you could end in an upbeat tone: "If circumstances change, we will reconsider your request."

When shouldn't you put something in writing? Certainly you shouldn't put something in writing when you are angry and your remarks could come back to haunt you. You also shouldn't spend time writing when the document isn't worth the time to be written. When the message isn't worth the time spent with pen in hand, and a one-on-one

conversation is difficult, then make a phone call instead.

1.2 How can I best get my messages across?

To communicate effectively in person or in writing, your communications should be clear, complete, and as short as possible. To be clear, complete, and brief, first think about what action you want the receiver to take. Next, list all the facts the other party will need: the who, what, when, where, and how. Then you need to consider how it will be perceived.

A message isn't finished being communicated, in writing or in

person, until you have considered how it will be received by the other party. This is determined by the other party's needs and concerns. If you are to be an effective communicator, you need to consider these factors and phrase your message in a way to ensure its acceptability.

Tell Me More

Acceptability can be enhanced by your credibility. This, in turn, can be strengthened by word choice. The words used should be direct and definite. Adjectives like "great,"

"fantastic," and "super" should not be overused, nor should qualifiers such as "really" and "very." The message should be as specific about each point as possible, including descriptive detail where appropriate.

A positive tone further enhances acceptability. Tone is a feeling or mood that the communication creates. The sender's aim should be to create a feeling in the receiver that "this is the kind of individual with whom I like to deal."

To develop and maintain a positive tone, emphasis should be on:

- What can be done rather than what cannot.
- Pleasant events rather than negative consequences.
- The beneficial aspects of the requested behavior or situation for the message recipient.
- The use of positive words such as "please."
- Respect for the other person's concerns.
- A message that contains accurate information framed

in an acceptable, positive
format.

1.3 What is the importance of body language in communication?

Verbal communication accounts for only about 7 percent of the meaning others will extract from your words. More important is the 38 percent accounted for by intonation, inflection, pitch, emphasis, speed, and volume, and the remaining 55 percent accounted for by body language (eyes, face, size, posture, motion, and gestures).

Consequently, if you want to be a good communicator, you need to be

as skilled in nonverbal communication as verbal communications.

Tell Me More

Enrich your vocal variety. Many people speak in a boring monotone. Tape yourself in a conversation. Should you modulate your voice for greater impact? How about speaking more slowly? Nerves can cause some people to hurry their words. Learn to pace your words to add authority to your remarks.

Another way to increase credibility is

by eye contact. Lack of eye contact suggests dishonesty or disrespect. Instead, look people in the eyes (or at the bridge of the nose) when you speak to them or they speak to you. Accompany all handshakes with smiling eyes. A pleasant expression and a smile help to create a positive tone. A jaw that is set or a frown that extends from eyes to mouth communicates resistance and displeasure or disapproval. It isn't just the facial expression. When your eyebrows are lowered, your voice also goes lower and sounds gruff.

Try this: Raise your eyebrows and say a few words. Your voice should

sound enthusiastic and optimistic. When you meet someone or lead a discussion, or address a group, raise your eyebrows above their natural position. It should make your voice sound more positive.

Good posture when standing or seated indicates that you are in control and have confidence in yourself. It also is a sign of respect for others. A slouch or slumped shoulders can convey indifference, ineptitude, or withdrawal.

Gestures can help to support or negate a verbal message. Defensive gestures such as arms folded

across the body or hands fidgeting with clothes, hair, or objects tend to erode credibility and evoke suspicion in the mind of the listener. Hands on the hips is an aggressive gesture, particularly when you are standing and the other party is seated in front of you. Hands held in the steeple position convey confidence and also a sense of power.

Once you understand nonverbal communication, you can be more effective as a communicator—both in delivering messages and truly understanding messages delivered by others.

1.4 How do I say "no" to an employee request?

You can soften your rejection of a request by using the "sandwich approach"; that is, put the "no" part of your response between two neutral or positive statements. The first comment paraphrases the request, demonstrating that you have heard it. "I understand why you would want a draft of the e-newsletter. However, I can't release the newsletter until all the information has been included. As soon as it's done, though, I'll see that you get a copy." If the person is

persistent, you need do no more than repeat your earlier refusal. If the individual continues to refuse to accept your reply, repeat your rejection again and again in a matter-of-fact tone.

Most "nos" have no need for explanation. Employees and colleagues have a right to ask you to do something—and you have the right to say "no." Keep that in mind. Bad news like the decision to reject a proposal or cut a budget may be better followed by an explanation, on the other hand.

Tell Me More

Saying "no" to an idea, proposition, or request from an employee or customer can create knots in your stomach. But the damage done in the delivery can be far worse than the answer itself.

You can say "no" with an uncaring attitude: "No way will I let you take tomorrow morning off." Or you can say "no" passively, hiding behind an excuse that is not the real reason: "I can't let you. The CEO may drop by and I would want you here to talk to him with me." Or you can say "yes"

and do "no." Tell the employee that he or she can take time off and then stop the employee as he or she is on the way out. "I hate to tell you but I need you to work with me on the budget. Come on into my office."

The last of these three ways to say "no" may be the easiest—but only at the time. In the long run, you will disappoint the person and even cause more severe problems than an honest "No, I need your help with the budget. Besides, you have used up all your vacation time."

A response—positive or negative—doesn't have to be immediate. Even

if you know you intend to say "no," it would be perfectly acceptable to ask for time to think about the request. If you need that time to consider the wording of your "no," you can do that. However, if your intent is simply to stall, better to get the "no" over with.

1.5 How do I deliver really bad news?

When the bad news will be a shock to the person or persons you have to tell, you may want to forewarn them. Start by saying, "I'm going to have to give you some bad news." Such an outright statement lets people prepare emotionally for the upset. Follow that up with the bad news and the "why" behind the bad news, if it will help the listeners to understand the news better. Demonstrate your courage by getting to the facts.

If appropriate, show up at the meeting with specific facts, numbers, and results in black and white, to better inform about the situation. This tactic will distance you from the situation, minimizing personal resentment against you. If the individual or group doubts your bad news, welcome their comments about doing their own investigation. In fact, tell them you hope they are right and you are wrong; if your information comes into question, encourage them to seek other expert opinions.

If there is any kernel of good in the bad news, mention it. If a project

has been killed, suggest that there may be information or insights that can be salvaged from the experience. If there will be downsizing, tell the group that there are no plans for further downsizing—if that is the reality.

Tell Me More

Let's assume that you can't be present when the news is delivered. One CEO, for instance, found himself in Asia when the events of 9/11 destroyed his New York City headquarters located in the Twin Towers. Under the circumstances,

for the first day or so, all communications from him came via tape and writing. As soon as he returned, however, he quickly met with his management team and later his employees to familiarize them with steps the company would be taking to help victims and their families of the terrorist attack.

His presence did nothing to soften the information he had to share, given the nature of the information. But sometimes a person's presence can build rapport that can ease the impact of the bad news. When putting your message in writing, you have to attempt to establish that

rapport by bringing up the topic in a positive way.

1.6 How can I respond to an angry employee?

The worst thing you can do when confronted with an angry employee is to try to "smooth over" the anger or simply tell the person to "calm down." That may cause a momentary lull, but it won't help to solve any underlying problems and may cause important information to be overlooked.

Sending the right message involves maintaining self-control, objectivity, and a willingness to remain reasonable. Active listening can be

hard to do in the heat of the moment, but it can immediately bring the decibel level and the argument to manageable levels.

Tell Me More

The first step in calming down the excited employee is to announce your recognition of his or her feelings—show that you understand that the person is angry. Becoming angry yourself will only hurt your relationship with the employee further. Wait until the yelling subsides and then let the angry person know you understand his or her version of

the story. "Let me see if I've got this straight. ..." The closer you are to the person's words, the better. This, again, encourages the individual to confirm, correct, or add to your understanding of the problem.

Now you might want to suggest that you and the employee find a private place to talk further. You don't want to be seen being berated by another person, no matter who that person is. In a private setting where people can sit down (it's harder, by the way, to continue an outburst in a sitting position), you can move beyond the outburst to solving the problem behind the outburst.

Look at the anger objectively. Too many people make the mistake of taking confrontations personally. Separate the person from the incident—put as much emotional distance between the two as possible. This will keep you from getting defensive and enable you to focus on the source of the diatribe and on finding a solution that is satisfactory to you and the other party.

1.7 How can I encourage my employees to share their ideas or talk about problems with me?

Surprise. The best way to generate a flood of ideas or information about problems from your employees is to ask them. Beg your people for suggestions if you have to. Make your desire for employee suggestions well known in your written and your spoken announcements. Don't let up. After a while they'll understand that you are serious.

Share your vision with your staff members. They will then be on the same wavelength as you are—and so will the ideas. You have a vision for the future of your department. Let your employees in on that today so they can help you get there tomorrow.

Don't criticize the ideas you get from your employees. Not all those suggestions you receive will be outstanding—some may not even be doable—but criticism can stifle the flow. In fact, you may even want to hold periodic meetings for the purpose of identifying ideas. These meetings may be held to come up

with ways to do the work better, faster, cheaper, or more profitably. The purpose of these and similar meetings is to fully utilize your employees' experiences to identify as a group better ways to get the work done.

When ideas are offered, get back to the source quickly. An employee should never say, "I wonder what my manager really thought about that idea I gave him last week." Thank employees who come to you with ideas. If an idea isn't perfect, talk to the employee to see if it can be improved. If you need to do some research, alert the employee.

Promise to get back to the employee by a certain time—and keep that promise. Respond as you said you would, even if it is to tell the employee that you may need a little more time to decide what to do.

One reason that managers dislike getting ideas from employees is the need to reject the bad ones. Not all ideas will be good. Some will really be terrible. About only a quarter of the ideas you receive will be usable. Those that aren't should be rejected tactfully. Say something like this: "Thank you for your idea on ...; the only thing that keeps us from using it is. ... If you think of a way to get

around this constraint, please take another crack at it." If the employees do get around the obstacles, then you may have a great solution to a major operations problem.

Tell Me More

It's better to hear about problems from your employees than from customers. Therefore, you have to remain accessible. If you're often out of town, out of the office, or just hard to call or meet with, employees may get discouraged and give up on keeping you informed. One way that

you can make yourself accessible is by engaging in "Managing by Wandering Around." One of the many advantages of spending a few minutes each day with your staff is that they have the chance to take you aside to reveal some new development in their work.

If you think that your employees aren't keeping you informed, the problem may be with you, not them. You think your employees aren't keeping you informed. But you may be in such a state of hustle and bustle that you aren't absorbing much of the information sent your way. If you have tended to react

negatively to bad tidings, you may also have inadvertently cut the flow of information—good and bad—from your employees. If an employee brings a problem to you, direct your response toward what can be done to keep the problem from happening again, rather than on punishing the person responsible. Watch not only your words but also nonverbal communications. If employees see that bad news causes you anguish and they respect you, they'll want to protect you from suffering.

Don't lose your temper, either, if some employees tell you things that you already know. If you reacted to

such situations with a loud retort, "I already know that!," it wouldn't come as a surprise that your employees provide news selectively and hesitantly

1.8 How can I counter erroneous rumors?

When you think of the grapevine, you think of gossip, mostly bad news about the organization. Whether you like it or not, a grapevine will exist in your company. You can't eliminate it but you can limit its potential for demotivating staff by feeding it accurate information.

Begin by sharing good news with staff members faster. Enjoy the excitement of telling your staff yourself before they hear it through the grapevine.

If you learn that inaccurate information is being spread, set the record straight. Meet with your employees and nip the destructive rumor in the bud.

Do this even if the news is, indeed, bad. Get the information out in the open where you can examine the implications with your staff.

Whatever you say should be truthful. Avoid spin. Most people know when they're hearing half-truths and propaganda-like messages. The only accomplishment of such communications is decreased morale.

Include a question and answer session to demonstrate your openness and desire to be candid with your employees.

Tell Me More

Set a regular schedule in which you and your staff will meet to discuss operating issues and other topics. Your employees should be able to count on receiving information at regular intervals. That way they'll spend less energy looking for information elsewhere.

Besides formal meetings, be

prepared to handle questions from your employees when they come to you. Then tell the employees what you know. If you know what might happen, say so. If you know something is under discussion but nothing has been decided, let the individual know that. Employees will appreciate that some things are just confidential and can't be discussed. In such instances, reveal as much as you can and then let your employees know that the rest of the information is confidential. If circumstances change and you can share the entire story, you will do so.

1.9 One of my colleagues continually interrupts me. What can I do or say to end this?

The best way to handle the problem is to interrupt the person who has interrupted you. Then, in a calm voice, you should ask, "Please wait until I finish my thought." In group discussions, the perpetrator of the bad habit is likely to back down.

Once you have completed your remarks, you might say to the individual, "Now, what did you want to contribute?"

If your colleague interrupts you even in one-on-one conversations, you may want to raise the problem with him or her in private. It could put an end to a good office friendship, and your colleague should be alerted to how annoying it is to be interrupted regularly.

1.10 How can I improve my listening ability?

Studies have shown that typically we remember only about 30 percent of what we hear. The effective listener will try to improve on this percentage. The techniques for doing so include the following:

- Practice active listening.
- Prompt further information.
- Beware of perceptual filtering.
- Restate what has been said.

Tell Me More

Practice active listening. We think about four times faster than we talk. That is a lot of thinking time. We can take advantage of that time by focusing on the message and determining whether we need more information to understand it. We should not allow ourselves to become defensive and thereby shut out the speaker's words, nor should we daydream.

If you are in a meeting, take notes to improve your retention. Don't take notes if the act of note taking will

distract you from what is being said.

Prompt further information. We often assume that an entire message has been communicated when a speaker stops talking. Not so. The speaker has just begun the conversation. Any statement made by a speaker can be followed up by at least one more statement of explanation or example. Therefore, a listener's response, whenever possible, should be a question that elicits further information.

This question should be neutral, nonjudgmental, and nonaccusatory; it should seek only to keep the

conversation flowing along the theme already established by the speaker. Instead of asking a specific question, the listener can simply repeat something that the speaker has just said with a questioning tone of voice. For example, if the speaker has just been talking about a situation in which he was unfairly blamed, the listener might respond, "What makes you feel that you are being blamed?" or "Why do you think this is happening?" This type of response will naturally lead to further information that can add to a growing understanding of the speaker's concern.

If you are accustomed to worrying about what to say next in a conversation, this approach will help to eliminate that anxiety since a rephrasing of something already said takes little preparation and allows for further listening.

Beware of perceptual filtering. As we listen to what people are saying, the words pass through a filter. This filter is our personal frame of reference, a result of our life experiences. Since no two people have the same set of experiences, perceptual filters are as individual as any other personal trait.

These filters can change the meanings of words from their dictionary definitions. They are what cause us to feel happiness, sadness, anger, or concern when certain words are used. These emotions may cause us to misunderstand as we listen, simply because our perceptions of the words' meanings may not match those of the speaker.

An important step toward being an effective listener, then, is to recognize that perception does influence understanding and must be considered in listening to what others have to say.

Restate what has been said. Repeat what the other party has said but in your own words. Say, "Let me be sure I understand clearly what you want me to do. First ... second ... third ...," or "Are we saying that ...?" or "The main points covered so far by you are ... have I left out anything you said?"

Practice these skills for showing respect for the speaker's ideas and avoiding possible misunderstandings and thereby build credibility for you as a capable, effective listener.

1.11 How can I present my ideas persuasively?

Not only should you know what it is that you want but you also have to visualize it in terms of the other person's needs. Consider the implications of your idea. When you present it, be as specific as you can. The key to getting buy-in is to make sure the idea meets some self-interest for the other person. You need to answer the question: What's in it for me? Document specific advantages, and provide convincing supporting data.

Even then, you may encounter resistance. If you expect opposition, defuse it before it is raised. Stand for your idea, then systematically and objectively disprove the objection to the idea, speaking calmly and objectively like an innocent bystander, not as a defender.

If the idea is rejected, find out why. It may be possible to overcome the objection by making adjustments to the initial idea. If you get what you want, include a reassurance that the person will like the final results. Leave the meeting with the increased possibility that he or she has positive feelings about you.

Tell Me More

It may help you to think about some common objections before you present your idea, so that you'll be prepared:

- Why should we fix something if it ain't broke?
- It will cost too much.
- It is too risky.
- We tried that before.
- We don't have experience with this.

- Let's wait to see what our competitors do.
- We don't have the resources just now.
- There's too much going on right now.
- I just don't think it will work.
- I agree, but they won't.

If you know the person to whom you are presenting your idea, you may be able to anticipate the specific objection that will be used. If you can do so, be prepared. State the anticipated objection as though it is

yours, then dismantle the objection piece by piece. If you get hit with an objection you didn't expect, listen carefully. If you aren't clear about the objection, probe. Acknowledge the wisdom of the objection: maybe ask for validation or substantiation for the objection. Don't argue or become defensive. Attack the question raised, not the questioner.

Show how you might be able to handle the objection. If resistance to your idea continues, solicit the objector's plan for overcoming his or her own concern. "How do you think we can overcome this problem?" Close ranks to find a way to

overcome shortcomings in your idea. If you see yourself losing, leave the door open. Ask, "I'd like to think through your concerns to see what I can come up with. May I come back?"

1.12 How can I communicate more effectively with employees in remote locations?

Thirty percent of communications via phone are true communications—that is, live communications. The remaining 70 percent of the time in which the phone is used, it is to send voicemail.

Here are some tips for using live phone calls:

Make telephone appointments for

important calls when you need to discuss matters in depth, just as you would make person-to-person appointments. This is particularly important if the communications are between you and staff offsite.

Prepare a list to ensure that you cover all points you intend with the other party.

Return all calls the same day or have someone at your office follow up. If you call someone and are disconnected, you are responsible for redialing, even if they accidentally hang up. Since you placed the call, you know how to reach them.

If someone walks into your office while you are on the phone, motion him or her out the door or into a seat, but don't interrupt your phone conversation.

When you mistakenly take a phone call that you are not prepared for, spend a few minutes on the phone as courtesy and then reschedule it for a later date. If the other party is one of your staff members from another site or at home, you can come across as confused or disinterested if you try to carry on the conversation at that moment.

If a client or coworker is, for

legitimate reasons, extremely angry on the phone, quietly listen without interjecting anything. Then, using tact and diplomacy, state your case. If you end up going in circles, suggest you need more information and then set up a phone meeting. If the anger disintegrates into abusiveness, don't respond. Just calmly say, "For the moment, I don't think we have all the facts to resolve this. I will call you tomorrow after I have done more research." End the conversation. Call back the next day; hopefully, the party will have calmed down.

Voicemail can be helpful in dealing with not only that employee off site

but other callers. If a person isn't there, you can leave a message. If you have a question, you can leave a query on the party's line, and she can leave a reply on your machine if you aren't around to pick up the phone when she calls back. On the other hand, don't use voicemail to leave job instructions. Rather, ask the employee to call. If you have a busy schedule, set a time for the individual to return the call and leave that as part of your message.

What about the voicemail messages you leave?

First, keep them short. Have you

ever come into the office and pressed "Listen" on your phone, then heard a long and rambling message?

Second, remember that with voicemail, you are unable to judge by facial gestures or other body language whether the message has been understood and that the recipient of the message is not confused.

Tell Me More

How can you improve the quality of your voicemail messages?

Keep three-by-five cards next to the phone to jot down your main points prior to making a phone call. If you reach your caller in person, you will be able to remember all your important issues. If you get voicemail, you will be equally prepared.

If you get voicemail, identify yourself by leaving both your name and company affiliation. Don't assume that your voice will automatically be recognized. How many of us have received voicemail messages from friends who introduce themselves with "Hi, it's me." Huh?

If further steps need to be taken—like a return call—make that clear.

If the voicemail is lengthy, leave your phone number clearly and distinctly both at the beginning and at the end of the message.

If it is a long message, warn the listener in advance, indicating that you will be leaving a message in some depth and he or she may want to review the message at a more convenient time.

If the option is available, review your voicemail before sending it. Most systems will allow you to erase and

start over if you don't think the earlier message was clear.

Just as you shouldn't send an e-mail while you are annoyed with the recipient, so you shouldn't leave a voicemail message for someone while you are angry. A harsh or negative message won't facilitate communication. Worse, it may be archived and put on a speakerphone to share with others, thereby tarnishing your professional image.

Don't leave confidential information on voicemail.

Just as you should check your e-mail

at least twice a day and more if you receive time-sensitive information, so you should check voicemail. If you will not be checking voicemail for a period of time, be sure to indicate that on your outgoing message and leave a date when you will be retrieving and responding to voicemail.

1.13 How can I best give directions to my employees?

Before giving any directions, you need to plan:

1. What you want as the end result of the communication. Set objectives.
2. Who should receive the directions.
3. How you will give the instructions so they will be best understood. That

means you have to select the appropriate medium. Would it be better to put the instructions in writing? Or can you just tell the person? And if you do the latter, should you consider breaking the procedure into steps to clarify them?

4. When will the directions be given. Timing is important. For instance, if it is going to take fifteen minutes to give the instructions, it makes no sense to begin to give the instructions five minutes before quitting

time.

5. Where the directions will be given. You need to identify a place where there will be few interruptions, and external noise will be at a minimum.

Tell Me More

Before actually giving the instructions, find a way to put the employee at ease. You might start the communication with small talk. This time also allows the employee to get ready to listen if his or her

thoughts are elsewhere.

After developing some rapport, move on to state the objective or goal of the task. Understanding the "bigger picture" will also help the employee to achieve the end result. After that, you can proceed to give the directions as you thought them through in Step 1. Be sure to state exactly what you want done, how you want it done, and when you want it done.

State the deadline—either for the work as a whole or for various interim steps. If the employee will have access to funds, then you need

to be clear about the money available—upper and lower limits. You might also want to forewarn the employee of any problems that he or she may encounter. With your advance information, you will lessen the apprehension when obstacles surface, when some steps take longer than anticipated, or changes in plans may be necessary.

You don't want to give too much detail. Excessive details only confuse; they won't clarify. Clarity should be your goal. When an employee questions an instruction, the problem is more likely vagueness than complexity.

To make sure the directions are understood, ask for feedback from the employee. Don't just ask, "Do you have any questions?" Most of the time, you won't get a reply. By asking a question, employees tend to think they are giving you a poor impression of themselves. So, instead, ask the employee to tell you in his or her words your request. If the employee has a question, you need to demonstrate you are willing to take the time to answer fully. There are no dumb questions, only dumb answers.

Once the employee gets to work, your responsibility isn't over. You

need to stop by to see if the employee is having a problem or difficulty with the task. The extent of follow-up will be influenced by the expertise of the person doing the work, as well as the complexity of the project. Naturally, with newer and less experienced workers, follow-up checks should be made more frequently. The same rule applies with experienced workers if they are handling a difficult assignment that may test the limits of their talents.

On the other hand, you don't want to be too obtrusive in your follow-up efforts, especially with seasoned

employees, since they may interpret your inquiries as a lack of confidence in their ability.

It isn't so important that the employee do the job as you want so long as he or she gets the results you want. If there is likely to be a problem, you may want to intervene and discuss, once again, the task. Go over the instructions again, emphasizing where you see a problem arising. If the employee isn't aware that he or she isn't doing as instructed, you may have to point up the problem with the work so far.

This process of follow-through is as

important as the initial delegation process.

1.14 How do I delegate tasks that I'm tempted to do myself?

Giving work to an employee is delegation, one of the hardest tasks for some managers. Part of the problem is due to a reluctance to relinquish control of anything they're working on. Many managers operate on the basic assumption that someone else either can't do the work or at least can't do it as well as they can. At the other extreme are those who essentially delegate every chore imaginable, including those they should properly do themselves.

These are tasks that involve confidential information, are tied to shaping your organization's vision or goals, are related to performance management (appraisals, discipline, coaching, and counseling), or are politically sensitive situations

Theoretically, you can delegate anything to your employees. But certain tasks lend themselves to being delegated, like the following:

- Detail work
- Information gathering
- Repetitive assignments

- Surrogate roles

Tell Me More

Detail work. The devil is in the details, details that could take up much time and could be done as well by one of your employees as by you. It isn't for you to do—your responsibility is to orchestrate the workings of an entire team of workers toward a common goal.

Information gathering. Browsing the Web for information about your competitors, spending hours poring over issues of newspapers, business

magazines, and newsletters, or moving into your local library's stacks for weeks on end is not an effective use of your time as a manager. Despite this fact, most managers do tend to get sucked into this trap. They are being paid to look at the big picture—to make sense of lots of information—not to gather the needed information. That is the task of one of your employees, someone skilled in doing such research and who has a clear idea of what you are looking for.

Repetitive assignments. Routine tasks that can be assigned to your employees should be handled this

way. If you find yourself involved in repetitive assignments, stop to take a close look at the tasks. Are you the only person who can do them? If so, is it due to the nature of the tasks or the lack of training of staff members? If the latter, what do you have to do to train your employees? After you figure this out, develop a training schedule and make assignments to your employees.

What if an employee refuses to accept the assignment or agrees to do the work provided he or she gets a raise or promotion? Faced with this response, you should not give in. Rather, remind the employee that it

is within his or her job duties to do the task. Failure to do the work will be reflected in the person's performance appraisal, as would his or her willingness to take on additional tasks.

Surrogate roles. You don't have to go to all those meetings or take clients on company tours or sit in on conference calls within your organization. Rather, you should give your employees the opportunity to participate in these meetings. Obviously, you can't be everywhere all the time, nor should you try to be. Not only could your time be better spent but attendance at these

sessions can be seen as learning experiences for your employees.

Sometimes, no matter how well you follow the rules above, the delegation goes wrong—very wrong. Follow-through will enable you to identify the danger signs before it is too late. Coach and counsel the employee. If that proves ineffective, you will need to rescind the employee's authority to complete the task independently. The individual still will do the task but under your close guidance and authority.

The ultimate solution when delegation goes wrong is to reassign

the activity to another employee. If your employee cannot do the task, then it must be given to someone who is more suitable to perform the work successfully. The bigger problem—the employee's failure to do the work—becomes the subject of counseling and future performance management.

1.15 How can I become more effective as a negotiator?

Before you enter into any negotiation, you need to be sure of why you are doing so. What specific conditions do you want to exist when an agreement is reached? Will you accept less? What is the absolute minimum you will accept?

Just as you know your needs, you need to know about your opposition's stance, behavior, or negotiating style. How rigid will the person be? What ploys will the other

party use to convince you? How confident is he or she? Spend as much time as you can with your opposition in the hours, days, and weeks leading up to the actual negotiation so you know what the opposition truly wants to get out of the negotiation.

You need to go further. Not only must you anticipate the goals of the opposition but also the strategy of the opposition. Ask yourself, "If I were in the opposition's shoes, what strategies would I employ?" Ask yourself, too, what issues the other party is likely to bring up and want to settle before an agreement will be

reached.

Tell Me More

You have to enter negotiations with a plan, one flexible enough that you can deviate from it as conditions change. What is your opening position? What will your response be to the several possible positions your opposition may take? What if he or she responds with a "take it or leave it" attitude? Would it make sense, if that occurs, to call a recess? Or are you or the other party rushed to reach a settlement? If so, you may want to set a

timetable at the beginning of the session. While the other party may use this timetable to pressure you, you might also use this ploy to pressure the other party to settle. If you take a take-it-or-leave-it position yourself, be sure that you aren't bluffing.

If you feel as if you can't move further to closure, you might want to ask the other party what will close the negotiations. You may be willing to make a concession. It may be so insignificant that it won't matter.

There is no such thing as a win/win negotiation. One person always

gains a little more from a negotiation than the other. That said, you don't want to end a negotiation by alienating the other party.

Consequently, you may want to close the negotiation with a final concession—something to sweeten the pot. If you provide one final concession, the negotiation will be mutually agreeable.

1.16 How can I become better at making presentations?

At the very least, before you begin preparing your speech, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What exactly am I supposed to speak on? Will my audience expect me to provide the facts and figures or just an overview?
2. How long am I supposed to speak? A good speaking rate is around 125 to 150

words per minute. If you are to give a ten-minute speech, that would only be a 1,200- to 1,500-word address.

3. What attitudes does the audience hold about the topic? Is it informed or not about the subject? Does it have a bias about the subject? Will the members of the audience have work to do after the presentation or is it a need for more information?

So, to give an effective speech, you

need to know the specifics of the topic, the timeframe, and your audience. Once you have that information, you are truly ready to develop your speech. The speech itself can be about how to do something, update the audience's information, describe a typical experience with X, Y, or Z, set limits and clarify issues, argue the pros or cons of an issue, or solve a problem. The approach should be appropriate to the subject. Then you can proceed to develop the presentation, tailoring your approach to your audience.

Consider asking a question, telling a

story that makes the subject real to your audience, conducting a minisurvey of your audience, or conducting a quiz or an exercise to get audience interest. Your approach should communicate to your audience that you understand its needs.

If you decide to use visuals, make sure that they are clear, accurate, and easy to follow. Be as up to date with technology in your delivery as you can—if you can, use a laptop to deliver a PowerPoint-based presentation rather than depend on a flipchart or overhead transparencies. If your information is

well supported by statistics, use them in your speech. Provide handouts and take the time to explain them to your audience.

The speech itself should be kept simple. Keep your main ideas simple and repeat them through the use of review, example, and summary. Expert speakers believe that the same rules that apply to writing apply to speaking: "Tell 'em, tell 'em what you said you were going to tell 'em, and tell 'em what you told 'em."

When the time comes to deliver the speech, take a deep breath, pause, and smile at the audience. Consider

members of the audience as friends, not opponents. Don't come with a written speech. Rather, prepare notes and refer to them as you speak. If you are using visuals, practice their use to ensure your thoughts are in sync with your slides.

Tell Me More

Let's assume the worst scenario: The laptop won't work, the handouts aren't done as promised, and you have a cold. So life isn't a bed of roses. But don't apologize to your audience. Get to the speech and go on. When you are speaking, you

must do the best you can with what you have. Present yourself as resourceful and competent.

Apologizing only makes others think you are unprepared.

If you get anxious about speaking, try to identify its cause and deal with it. Most people are anxious about speaking so there is no point in denying your anxiety, at least to yourself. If you're nervous about the size of the audience, look for a friendly face or try to get the audience on your side from the start by telling an amusing story. If you have the usual generalized nervousness common to most

speakers, the best cure is practice in not-too-threatening situations. If you expect to do a lot of speaking for your firm in the future, you might want to practice by volunteering to lead a discussion group in a civic organization or to chair a staff meeting.

1.17 How can I better manage e-mail messages I send?

Here are some rules to sending effective e-mail messages:

Keep messages clear but concise.

To help recipients prioritize e-mail, highlight at the top of the message whether your e-mail requires any type of action—for instance, "Action required."

Make certain that your information is accurate. Because e-mail can be printed, archived, forwarded, and

even broadcast, it becomes a permanent, un-erasable document with your name attached to it. Contrary to what the delete key says, e-mail is never permanently deleted and can be retrieved.

Tell Me More

Don't send an e-mail if you are angry or emotional. Cool off, sleep on it, and then reconsider your response. Once you have determined your response, put yourself in the receiver's place and determine how you would feel receiving it.

Reread each e-mail for spelling errors and correct grammar. Just as letters shouldn't go out with misspelling, incomplete sentences, or grammatical errors, e-mail should be afforded the same attention.

Be discriminating when attaching lengthy attachments. They take time to print, tying up network printers, as well as time to read. Also, make certain that you attach the correct document.

Consider the volume of e-mail a recipient receives before including him or her in a broadcast list.

Be very careful about identifying some e-mail as "urgent." Use this warning sparingly. Otherwise, you may find yourself in the same predicament as the boy who cried wolf too often.

If you have not had any correspondence with someone, introduce yourself with your first e-mail by identifying your company, an area of interest, your background, or some other important link.

Always update or complete the subject heading on the e-mail. The subject heading should be indicative of the content of the e-mail. This

courtesy will help individuals who receive numerous e-mails each day to prioritize those that need action first.

If you only e-mail someone periodically, use a greeting and a closing. If you are in constant and consistent e-mail with someone, it is not necessary to use a greeting every time. However, it is polite to do a brief sign-off such as a simple "Thanks." In face-to-face communication, body language serves this purpose. In e-mail and voicemail, we have to use words.

If you set up telephone or in-person

appointments using e-mail, be certain to follow up to confirm with a phone call. Systems and servers go down and a follow-up phone call—even a voicemail message—ensures the connection is made.

1.18 How can I manage the e-mail I receive?

It's very easy to get caught up in your e-mail, checking almost every few minutes to see if you have another e-mail message. But that is a terrible waste of time. Better to check your e-mail only twice a day, more often only if you receive time-sensitive information. If you aren't able to check your e-mail for a period of time, be sure to leave an outgoing message indicating the date when you will be reading and responding to your messages.

Separate attachments from e-mail, and electronically file them. Don't allow e-mail to accumulate to the point that your server cannot handle another message

1.19 How can I improve the quality of reports I write? I do project progress reports, variance reports, and proposals.

The best reports are accurate, brief, and clear. If the report is for a specific person, always take into consideration what that person finds useful. Some people want details, others prefer highlights and will ask for more information only if it is needed.

Some reports will be read by several people, each with his or her own approach to processing information. If you expect the report to pass through many hands, to please as many readers as possible, provide a summary of results at the beginning of the report and then back it up with specifics. A reader can study the summary and select the backup pages desired. Use graphs, charts, and diagrams where appropriate. Many people prefer to study a visual than to peruse text or tables.

Tell Me More

When you sit down to write a report, there are seven steps to follow:

1. *Define the problem.* It may be obvious to you, but it may not be so obvious to those who are reading your report for the first time. Before a single word of a report is put down, this thought needs to be completed: "The purpose of this report is. ..." The problem statement itself should be precise, descriptive, and defensible (think "workable"). When you put it in writing, it

should take no more than twenty-five words.

2. *Develop a work plan.*

Likely, your proposal will need a work schedule; that is, the estimated time to complete the project and the specific tasks with it. But you may also want to develop a work plan for completion of the proposal itself. Envision the final report in terms of scope, depth, length, and format. How can you facilitate its completion?

3. *Gather relevant data.*

Complete and accurate findings are the basis for all well-received reports. If all the information you need isn't at hand, you might wait for the missing material, or write without it

4. *Process your findings.*

Once you have your data, you need to analyze and organize your findings while also drawing tentative conclusions from them. Additionally, by force-fitting findings in various combinations, you

may come up with some unexpected results.

5. *Develop conclusions.*

Always remember that conclusions are derived exclusively from analysis of findings. If a reader detects the slightest break in this necessary link between findings and conclusions, your credibility is shattered. Only when conclusions naturally flow from documentable findings can the reader trust your writing.

6. *Generate recommendations.* The final step is extracting recommendations from the conclusions. Arrange your ideas by priority and sequence, making them consistent with the problem statement, providing options whenever appropriate, and expressing them in a manner most likely to secure their acceptance.

If you have some doubts about the finished document, you may want to show it to a colleague to review.

This review provides a final check on the accuracy of findings, the logical consistency of the conclusions and recommendations, and the tone and readability of the document.

One other tip: Reports fall into four categories: informational reports, narrative reports like meeting minutes, interpretative reports, and recommendation reports that contain results from a feasibility study or problem and solution tied to a proposal.

Informational reports contain the following:

- Executive summary
- Overview/background
- Work completed to date
- Work in progress/actions initiated
- Anticipated problems
- Forecast for the next stage

Narrative reports take a sequential format, like meeting minutes begin with information about the attendees, date, time, and place of the meeting, then the purpose of the meeting, the summary of what took

place, and finally actions to be taken and by when.

Interpretive reports follow this model:

- Executive summary
- Overview/background
- Present situation
- What's being done to pursue the opportunity or solve the problem and the time schedule
- Expected results

Recommendation reports have different formats, depending on their purpose. For instance, feasibility reports begin with an executive summary with recommendations, overview or backgrounder, review of the problem, criteria for the solution, analysis of the option, risks and solutions, and finally, recommendation. Comparison reports include criteria for analysis of the options. Proposals begin with a description of the problem or situation then solution, followed by benefits of the solution and its costs, implementation (steps to be taken), and the conclusions.

To determine which of these models is the best one for that report due next week, ask yourself these questions:

Why am I writing this report, and how will it be used?

Am I trying to persuade, inform, report, request, or analyze?

Do I want the reader to take action or to simply review my report?

1.20 How can I improve my writing style?

If clarity of communication is a problem, then the secret to improving your communication may be to spend more time planning what you will say before putting words to paper. Before beginning to write, if you don't do so already, you should jot down a few words, phrases, or other notes to help organize your thinking. Outlining is also helpful, particularly for long memos.

Such an outline breaks down the document into a lead sentence;

separate paragraphs, each for a different thought; introductory sentences for each paragraph to position it within the main document and allow for scanning; and a closing or summary statement at the end.

In addition, to send clear communications, stay away from long sentences and fancy words that will only create confusion. Better to use shorter, more familiar words. And get to the point. Managers don't have the time to write long memos unless the contents demand it, and their readers don't have the time to read long memos and reports unless the content requires it.

Tell Me More

If you want to improve your writing, here's some advice to follow:

Write to express, not impress. Your primary purpose should be to communicate your ideas. Fancy words and long sentences might have impressed your English professor but they aren't likely to do more than annoy in the realm of business. Use short, familiar words that sound sincere and conversational, no formal or academic phrases.

Keep your sentences brief.

Sentences twenty to twenty-four words long are typical in poor business writing and, again, throwbacks to college papers. Longer sentences are harder to follow and are almost always less precise.

Become more personal with your writing. Use the personal pronouns *I, me, you, we, and us*. "It has come to my attention that ...," is long and likely to drive readers away from the important message. Instead, be specific and say, "I learned ..."; or "Marketing tells me..."; or "Government studies remind us...."

Use the active voice instead of the passive voice. The passive voice forces you to use more words and lessens the impact of your writing.

Avoid needless words or phrases.

Phrases such as "there is" mean nothing and, more important, add nothing to a sentence except length. A poor example: "There is contained in the enclosed. ..." Better: "The enclosed pamphlet contains an important message. ..."

Beware of nouns ending in -ion, -al, or -ment. Write, "I decided to buy the company," not "I made a

decision to buy the company." Say, "Marketing recommended we lower the selling price," not "Marketing made a recommendation that we lower the selling price."

Avoid phony phrases, overused openings, and clichéd closings.

Don't *utilize* what you can *use*. Don't propose a *paradigm* that's really a *model*. Don't write, "Per our conversation," which comes across as formal and impersonal; instead, write, "As we discussed ...". "If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call" can be made reader-friendly: "If you have any questions, please let

me know."

1.21 How can I ask questions to get the information I need to do my job?

Your job demands questions to accomplish the following:

1. Questions for inquiry or fact-finding: getting the facts to solve problems or make decisions.
2. Questions for confirmation: confirm facts previously gathered or conclusions made.

3. Rhetorical questions:
evoke introspection and
contemplation.

Each purpose demands a different set of questions:

For the purpose of inquiry, start by asking open-ended questions to gather facts. Postpone closed (yes or no) questions until confirmation of facts is needed. Make certain you ask your questions in a logical sequence. Start by defining the problem, then identify possible causes. Next, identify the true cause of the problem before asking questions to gather ideas from the

employee or colleague or customer about how to solve it.

Don't come to a conclusion until you've gathered all the information you need to make a well-considered decision.

Confirmation questions are the yes or no questions mentioned earlier: "Is it true that you weren't here at 9:00 this morning when Mr. Crawford called?" "Were you rude to Rene at lunch?" "Have you completed the report for me?"

When you want people to think about what they're doing, you should

ask a rhetorical question: "Why do you work as hard as you do?" Or, "What does quality really mean?" "Have you ever wondered why customers choose to buy from us and not our competitors?"

Tell Me More

Questions can be powerful—not just in the information they provide, but in the impact they can have on the flow of a conversation. For instance, when discussion meanders, you can get back on track with a question. Or when you're at a loss for words, you can ask a question. Questions,

then, buy you time to think.

Questions also will help whenever you're under attack. You might ask an employee who disagrees with your suggestion, "Why do you believe my idea won't work?" Or let's assume a colleague gets upset about a remark you made in a group meeting, you might ask, "What have I said to make you feel that way?" Questions can also help when a customer complains: "Please tell me exactly what went wrong?" "What will it take to get you back as a customer?"

As with any conversation, monitor nonverbal cues when asking

questions. You want to ask questions in a genuinely inquisitive tone of voice, with an anticipatory look on your face and in a nonthreatening posture. No matter the words you use, if your voice, facial expression, or posture communicates condescension, the response to your questions will be reflective of your body language.

Chapter 2: Motivational Management

2.1 How do I identify employees' needs to motivate them better?

By understanding what pressing, unfulfilled needs people have, managers can motivate them. So the key to motivating employees becomes accurately identifying a person's needs, then using that information to inspire him or her to do the best possible job. All motivation comes from within, but managers can identify the rewards and recognition that will influence their employees' internal motivation. This can be done using either

Maslow's, Herzberg's, McClelland's, or Mayo's model.

Tell Me More

Abraham Maslow created a pyramidal hierarchy of needs to describe how people are motivated. At the lowest level are physiological needs—needs for food, drink, and shelter. The next level of need is safety, which includes needs for security, stability, and freedom from fear. The third level of needs—social needs—involves friendships and contacts with others. Esteem and self-actualization are at the highest

level of the pyramid. The need for esteem is met when we feel important or are needed by others, and self-actualization needs are fulfilled when we realize our full potential.

Frederick Herzberg's findings, as described in his Two-Factor Theory, were similar. Herzberg divided people's needs into five dissatisfiers and five satisfiers. The five satisfiers included achievement, recognition, interesting responsibilities, positive work relationships, and opportunity for growth. The five dissatisfiers were supervision (a manager unwilling to teach and delegate

responsibility), administration (including poor communication with the worker), unsafe or unpleasant working conditions, poor interrelationships, and salary (inadequate compensation). He went on to suggest that a good hygienic environment could prevent job dissatisfaction but couldn't affect satisfaction. Only the job satisfiers could do that.

David McClelland identified the needs of self-motivated achievers whom he believed made up about 10 percent of the population. These high achievers preferred to set their own goals, goals that were tough

but realistic, and preferred tasks that provided them with immediate feedback. He felt it was possible to build achievement traits into jobs by including personal responsibility, individual participation in setting productivity targets, creation of moderate goals, and fast, clear-cut feedback on results.

Finally, Elton Mayo argued in favor of small work groups for motivating workers. He felt that when people become part of an informal work group, they experience a social relationship that increases their performance. His research was supported by the experiences of

Japanese companies using teams after World War II.

So the work of these researchers has become the foundation for efforts by managers to increase employee job performance.

2.2 How are employees demotivated?

Research in the 1950s identified several things that demotivate employees. The following is based primarily on the work of Herzberg and is a list of motivation don'ts:

- Never personally attack someone.
- Never embarrass an employee.
- Don't govern by fear.
- Don't shoulder all the

responsibility.

Tell Me More

Never personally attack someone.

By all means, give constructive feedback. But you should criticize only the behavior, not the person.

Never embarrass an employee.

When you have to provide negative feedback, do so in private. Self-esteem is critical to motivation.

Don't govern by fear. If you are known to blame and finger-point, you won't foster a climate of open

communication and teamwork, which are key motivating elements.

Don't shoulder all the responsibility.

Sharing responsibilities will make your employees feel valued and respected, which will add to their motivation.

2.3 What non-financial rewards and recognition can I use to motivate my employees?

The list below isn't complete but it may give you some ideas about how to recognize your employees for outstanding performance:

Allow employees to take a long lunch or have a short workday.

Offer a round of applause from the team.

Distribute movie tickets.

Hold a celebration.

Offer interesting projects.

Bring in food for the department.

Give time off or extra vacation days.

Deliver a note or letter of appreciation from a member of senior management.

Provide dinner for two at a local restaurant.

Designate an employee-of-the-month parking place.

Print a photo and brief article about the stellar worker in the company newsletter.

Host a team lunch.

Write your own thank-you note.

Offer a personalized gift.

Hold a lunch in the employee's honor.

Create a bulletin board that contains the photos of outstanding performers.

Give the performer
challenging work.

Assign the person to a highly
visible task force or team.

Look for opportunities for
cross training.

Empower the employee,
giving him or her the latitude
to do the work as he or she
sees fit.

Support the employee by
working together to develop
career goals and
development plans to

achieve them.

Which would work most effectively with your employees? Ask them. No one approach will work for everyone. You must build a unique package of motivational strategies for each of your employees. Should rewards be given? If so, what rewards? Should a job be redesigned? How? Should an employee be praised, challenged, or reassured? Ask each of your employees what he or she needs from work. Rather than imposing rewards of little value or appealing to unimportant needs, solicit his or her input. If you don't want to give an

employee options, observe the employee. What makes the person smile? What gives him or her pleasure? If you know someone is really interested in sports, you might recognize the person with two tickets to a sporting event. Certainly, don't set in motion a ceremonial "roast," putting the person on the spot with a call for a speech, or asking the person to describe his or her accomplishments to upper management, before talking to the individual. Whatever you do to recognize an employee, be sure they know what the reward is for.

Tell Me More

The key to using recognition is in making it part of your daily routine. Good managers remember to recognize employees. Great managers do it every day. They maintain a "to do list" to which they add the names of the people who report to them who deserve recognition. They use voicemail not only to assign tasks but to leave employees messages praising them for a job well done. They keep a stack of note cards on their desk, where they can't ignore them. At the end of the day, they take a minute to

write thank-you notes to any employee who made a difference that day.

In each case, remember that the recognition must have been earned. Otherwise, it becomes perceived as worthless by those who receive it.

And onlookers lose respect for the judgment of the praise-giver.

2.4 How can I best deliver a sincere compliment when praising employees?

To begin with, the praise offered *must* be sincere. You can avoid appearing phony by using it only when it is deserved—when the employee is doing excellent work. Praise also works best when it is very specific and immediately follows the event. Exceptional performance should be followed up with not only praise, but rewards as well.

Tell Me More

"Hal, you're doing a great job; keep up the good work" is not an example of good praise. For all you know, Hal spent that morning making personal calls and goofing off. Your remark will make you appear like a pushover, someone easy to fool.

On the other hand, if Hal recently completed a marketing report ahead of schedule that included several important findings, then you might say, "Hal, you did a great job on that video sales report. Keep up the good work."

You can also go into more detail with Hal to let him know how much it means to you and the company. You might even suggest he join you for lunch as a way to reward him for the impact that his findings will have on future sales efforts.

Not only should praise be specific, it should immediately follow the employee's effort or achievement. This will give it the greatest impact. It also tells your people you know immediately when they are on the right track. Just as it is important that you promptly tell an employee when an improvement in performance is in order, you should

take the time to give earned praise on the spot. No matter how busy, the brief time spent in thanking an employee is time well spent. Giving praise has strong, positive effects not only on the recipient but on his or her coworkers, who see that you care not only about what they do wrong but what they do right.

Let's assume that Hal has been a mediocre employee until this occasion. You might want to sit down with him and specify what he did right this time compared to past performance. You might conclude your meeting by giving him another assignment: "Hal, I want you to take

the same approach on this study as you did on the video sales analysis."

One caveat about the use of praise: Recognize that praise rings hollow if that's all hardworking employees get. Bonuses, interesting job assignments, and other forms of appreciation are absolutely essential at some point to sustain motivation.

2.5 How can I help my high achievers to feel uniquely valuable?

High achievers can be challenged with increased responsibility, access to new assignments, new training, and job rotation. Look at a high achiever's position and the associated tasks. How can they be changed to make the position an opportunity for growth? Redesigning the work may satisfy the needs not only of the high achiever but also of your organization. Skills improve along with knowledge of the organization, which can stimulate

ideas for more efficient or effective operations. Work redesign or enrichment is a particularly appropriate motivational tool for high achievers since their capabilities can enable them to succeed in assignments that may daunt or overwhelm average performers.

Consider job rotation where it is feasible to present the employee with more opportunity to learn. Today's leaner organizations no longer have the kinds of management development initiatives that once existed, but you can fashion a management development assignment tailored to the needs of

the individual.

Assignments outside the organization should also be considered. "On loan" support to the community, for instance, can provide experience not available in the workplace and help strengthen your company's relationship with the community.

Based on these special assignments, you may discover the employee needs some training. Training is another valuable perk that can be used to motivate.

Finally, you might want to have one

of your peers or, better yet, a senior executive act as mentor. If the chemistry between the mentor and high-achieving protégé is good, the positive relationship between the two not only will help the high achiever grow professionally but also will tie your high achiever to your organization in a way that can benefit your organization as he or she continues to contribute to its success over time.

2.6 What can I do to motivate my average or mediocre performers?

Recognition and rewards can encourage performance improvement from these non-superstars. If you wait for a significant improvement in their performance, you may never get a chance to recognize them, yet without reinforcement of some small improvement they are unlikely to sustain the behavior change long enough to make a major improvement in their work behavior.

For these individuals, you might consider a small gift—even a thank-you note for the added effort will work. It might be that the employee worked through lunch one day (however reluctantly), corrected a mistake without being told, or took care of a customer when it wasn't his or her job.

An employee who receives reinforcement for one change may try another, then another, then still another, until all of them add up to the performance you are looking for.

Tell Me More

Here are some behaviors from these employees worthy of a thankyou:

- Learning new skills
- Helping a coworker
- Giving a customer added attention
- Acting as buddy to a new hire
- Tackling a problem in a fresh, and more efficient, manner
- Sharing information

- Offering to take notes during a meeting
- Perfect attendance
- Adapting willingly to change
- Cross-training another employee

2.7 How important are the physical surroundings in motivating my employees?

Employees want to work in a well-lit environment that has modern furniture and the latest equipment. Some people still want traditional offices. They don't want to work in a cubicle, no matter its size. They want offices with doors they can close when they need privacy to concentrate or make a personal phone call.

Other people like to come to work

with their laptop, grab a roll cart, and move to a work station far removed from others where they can concentrate or sit beside a team member and work out a problem. Some people don't mind living in cubicles provided they are bigger than closets and allow for some personalization.

Lighting is also an issue. There are ergonomic issues to consider: People don't want to crane their necks to avoid glare. Fluorescent lighting is still most popular but increasingly companies are moving to full-spectrum lighting, which simulates natural, outdoor light and

has been found to reduce fatigue and headaches and increase alertness. It also seems to be easier on the eyes than fluorescent lighting.

Tell Me More

No one loves to work in a cubicle, but they are a reality today. You can make them livable by your placement of workers and cube construction. Don't make employees whose jobs require intense concentration next-door neighbors to employees who are on the phone a lot because of their work. Check to see that cube walls aren't wafer thin

so the crackle of paper as it is tossed in a waste basket is heard through the shared wall by a neighbor in the adjoining cubicle.

Even if you only provide cubicles for your employees, your workspace may inevitably convey some sort of hierarchy. Some people may have larger cubes than others; one person may be more centrally located or be in a more desirable location. Don't think that office envy will disappear along with the doors to cubicles. The important thing is that your workspaces allow people to work productively, however that may translate in your department or

organization. If people feel as if they can do their best work—whether in an office or cubicle—they won't be as focused on what the person down the hall has that they don't.

Whether they occupy offices or cubicles, let your employees individualize their surroundings. Allow pictures and other personal items within reason. Your employees will feel more comfortable. You may find that cubicles or offices that reflect the personality of the inhabitants can also increase camaraderie and consequently lead to more effective teamwork.

This doesn't mean that you can allow your employees to go wild decorating their offices. Lay down the ground rules for what is inappropriate. For instance, you don't want posters and calendars that might raise sexual harassment concerns. Think about the overall image you want your company to convey. As you visit your staff members, put yourself in the shoes of a customer. If you were visiting, what impression would you get? Some workspaces are more than adequate—they just need some tidying up.

Whatever your office layout, you

want conference rooms as well as informal meeting areas that encourage employees to get involved in impromptu discussions, not just scheduled meetings.

Employees want to work where they can pop over to a coworker's desk to get some input or advice, access senior management easily when they need to, and discuss projects with coworkers as they pass them in the hall or are in the printer area to pick up a report.

2.8 How can I adapt my employees' jobs to make the work itself motivating?

Because certain job features are intrinsically satisfying, redesigning jobs can be a way to motivate employees. It is, after all, easier to change jobs in an organization than it is to change the jobholders.

There are three ways to redesign jobs:

1. *Job rotation.* Moving employees through a

variety of jobs, departments, or functions is a particularly a good approach for someone who has been on a job for a long time, who is no longer challenged by the job, or who has a strong need for activity or change. By giving an employee the opportunity to change jobs, you can prevent boredom and build a more versatile employee simultaneously.

2. *Job enlargement.* By expanding an employee's duties, you add challenge

to a job that has become boring. Once an employee has demonstrated the capacity to handle the current workload and has shown a desire to expand into new areas, adding new responsibilities will tell the employee that you recognize his or her worth. This can be motivating.

3. *Job enrichment.* Make the job more desirable or satisfying by giving the performer more autonomy, input into decision making, more interesting projects,

whole rather than fragmented projects, or more information about the organization.

Of these three approaches, job enrichment has proven most effective in motivating employees. To work effectively, you and the jobholder need to sit down to determine how you can enrich his or her job—that is, change the job so that corporate needs continue to be met but also the jobholder's desire for challenge and excitement.

Tell Me More

Consider if any of the following changes can be made to the work:

Can the job be changed so the jobholder is responsible for the whole job from beginning to end?

Obviously, a worker in an automobile factory can't build a whole car, but he or she could handle production of a carburetor from the time the raw parts are uncrated until the unit is mounted in the car.

Can you change the position so the employee can interact with users or clients? Having an ongoing relationship with the person who uses the service or finished product

can give the individual a sense of being a person rather than a cog in the machinery.

Can the employee be taught a variety of skills or abilities so he or she can complete all the tasks associated with doing a job? This can eliminate—or at least minimize—the sense of monotony. A Web site developer who has to follow a template day after day can become frustrated with the lack of creativity, but give that same technician the skills and knowledge to design sites and the individual will be more motivated.

Can the employee be trusted to run the show as far as the work is concerned? Not only would you be giving the employee an opportunity to participate in decisions, you would be giving him or her the freedom to decide how it should be done. Such autonomy can make the position more appealing in the long term and motivate the job-holder to perform the work effectively—and identify ways to do the work more efficiently.

Are there opportunities for self-development—that is, for the employee to stretch his or her mind and sharpen his or her skills in a

way that makes the employee more valuable to future employers as well as your company? Look for goals that, when satisfied, will help both the employee and your organization.

Be sure that, in the name of job enrichment, you don't just:

Add another routine task to current ones. An employee already bored with filing won't get much more satisfaction out of an additional assignment to distribute the department mail twice a day.

Increase the amount of work done. Don't try to reward an employee

who can complete one hundred orders a day by asking him or her to handle one hundred and fifty.

Rotate the person from one boring job to another dead-end position.

You have to truly enrich the employee's work.

2.9 How wise is it to use competition among employees to motivate and encourage increased productivity?

Over the short term, competition among employees and teams may stimulate increased performance. Over the long term, however, it can lower productivity by destroying the desire to collaborate. And most work demands some level of cooperation—in very few instances can work be done in isolation.

The necessary collaboration is not limited to teams within the same function; it goes further—it entails cooperation across disciplines. The same problems that happen between employees in competition also occur on a much broader level. Competition between group managers resembles rumbles between street gangs for turf. Information is hoarded. Ideas, though good, are refused. The not-invented-here mentality overrides the productivity or profitability improvements that might come with implementation of someone else's idea.

Tell Me More

Many managers don't deliberately create the conditions for competition among their employees. When siblings spar with one another, it's often a result of feeling deprived of attention, affection, feedback, or approval from one or both parents. Competition among employees may be due to the same feelings of neglect.

Because of competitive feelings, employees not only won't help peers but may even go out of their way to trip other colleagues up.

Competition entails both offensive and defensive actions. Offense is the effort your employees might put into scoring against their competition. And in most instances, this does stimulate higher performance although that increased effort doesn't necessarily benefit the organization. Where competition entails defensive actions, there is no question that it can create problems for a department, division, or company as a whole.

Those who suggest that "a little healthy competition can't hurt" are thinking only of offensive tactics and forget that even these efforts, if out

of alignment with corporate goals or values, can hurt the organization. When the employee wins, the organization may lose, if not in the short term, then in the long term.

So the offense component of internal competition is problematic. On the other hand, the defense component is always injurious, prompting anti-collaborative, anti-cooperative behavior.

2.10 How can I instill ownership to motivate employees?

You will get the most out of your employees if you, first, create a positive work environment and, second, give employees ownership of their work. Make your employees feel as if they are responsible fully for the outcome and their motivation and efforts will soar. Empowerment is the giving of power, and it's a win/win/win situation.

Going beyond delegating work to sharing decision making with your

top performers helps you because you're less bogged down by routine tasks and are now more available for work that requires your special expertise. It helps your best employees because it expands their skills and the challenges before them. And it benefits your company because you'll now have a top team of talented workers able to produce higher-quality work.

If you have trouble with the idea of delegating, then start small. Instead of letting someone take full responsibility for writing and printing your firm's annual report, start by assigning him or her responsibility

for a four-page e-newsletter.

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you move toward a culture of empowerment:

- Match the project with the employee's abilities.
- Give 100 percent responsibility.
- Explain the big picture.
- Tell all.
- Broker for your employees.

Tell Me More

Match the project with the employee's abilities. If the individual doesn't have the skills, then give him or her the training to do the job. You don't want to set someone up for failure. If you are uncertain how the employee will do at first, assign a smaller project so you can evaluate his or her performance.

Give 100 percent responsibility. Those empowered should be given ownership over the project you give them—each and every decision as well as responsibility for the final result. If the employee isn't going to be held responsible for the process and each step along the way, then

how can you hold him or her responsible for the end result?

Explain the big picture. Those empowered need as much information as you have. What makes the work important? How does it fit into the bigger department or corporate picture? What outcome would you like to have?

Tell all. Your employee should be as informed as you are. Don't just share what you know. Share your network of resources so he or she will stay informed. Offer insights, as well, about the implications of long-range business strategy, competitive

advantage, interdepartmental activities or anything else that might impact on the decision.

Broker for your employees. If you don't have the answer to a question or resources to help your employee be successful, then get them for him or her. Either make introductions or horse-trade for your staff member, relying on your corporate credibility to get what your staff member needs to complete the project as desired.

2.11 How do I create a culture of empowerment?

As the background for your empowerment effort, you want to create a culture of support. To that end consider the following:

- Listen to employees.
- Demonstrate your trust.
- Keep employees informed.
- Help employees balance work and personal lives.
- Offer opportunities for

lifetime learning.

- Foster open communication.
- Give bad news straight.
- Encourage reasonable risk.
- Foster autonomy.
- Praise success.
- Link rewards to organizational goals.

Tell Me More

Listen to your employees' ideas.

More important, determine how to make them work

Demonstrate trust in your employees. If you behave as if you expect them to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, they will go that extra mile to exceed expectations.

Give your employees the real picture, not corporatespeak. They need to be informed.

Help employees balance work and personal demands. Recognize your employees have lives beyond the office. Working long hours may

occasionally be called for, but should not be a measure of performance or a requirement.

Offer opportunities for lifelong learning. The more trained, the more able empowered employees are to assume greater authority.

Foster open communication. Show your employees that you consider yourself and them a part of a team—which means you will share all you hear from senior management when you can do so. (When you are told information in confidence by senior management, that information must remain in confidence. If your

employees ask about the topic, admit that the subject is being discussed among senior managers and promise to share with your team conclusions once reached.)

Don't sugarcoat bad news. Likely, your employees will know the real scoop. You'll only lose your workers' trust if you deviate from the truth or wimp out on the bad news.

Encourage reasonable risk. Let your employees know they will not be penalized for taking calculated chances that fail. If there is a mistake made, analyze it with the employee so he or she can avoid a

similar error in the future.

Foster autonomy. Make recommendations instead of issuing commands. Better, when an employee comes to you with a question, ask the employee how he or she would handle the problem. If the solution has shortcomings, discuss them with the employee to find ways to shore up his or her solution. Getting an employee to think for himself or herself is critical to empowerment.

Praise successes. When your employees meet or exceed expectations, recognize that fact in

public. Praising builds goodwill and also sends the message to all, within and outside your department, that your employees are doing well. If an employee has failed, don't criticize in public or use the situation to play "gotcha" to prove your superior abilities.

Link rewards to organizational goals. Ideally, rewards should reinforce the behavior that leads to attainment of an organization's goals. Rewards should positively reinforce good behaviors and decrease the frequency of undesirable performance.

2.12 How important is it for me to help employees find the work "fun"?

Actually, workers list having fun as one of the requirements for a satisfying job. What do they mean by "fun"? Not goofing off. According to studies on what it takes to make jobs fun, the greatest factor cited is teamwork. Employees say that they enjoy coming together as a team in the pursuit of common objectives. They appreciate the camaraderie, with the daily doses of humor and goodwill that come along with it.

When we need to do more with less and job stress is a daily fact of life, laughter can be a way to:

- Reduce stress.
- Eliminate anger.
- Reduce resistance to change.
- Generate creative thinking.
- Improve morale.
- Produce positive attitudes.
- Reduce absenteeism and turnover.

Tell Me More

Adding a little laughter to serious meetings can help a lot. Work is serious business, but the workplace doesn't have to be a solemn place. During tough economic times, it seems almost sacrilegious not to be somber, associating it with higher productivity (putting one's nose to the grindstone), so we work hard at being serious. This is exactly what we shouldn't do. A positive, upbeat environment is healthy in good and bad times.

2.13 Is there a good balance between micromanagement and a hands-off approach to motivate employees?

Taken to the extreme, hands-off management is an abdication of your responsibility and accountability to get the work done. On the other hand, micromanagement, the process of controlling every detail and decision associated with getting a job done, can take away an employee's pride of ownership in his or her work and can rob the

employee of job satisfaction. The worker becomes dependent on the micromanager to ensure the quality of the final job, so carelessness can creep in. Likewise, employees stop thinking creatively.

Micromanagers haven't learned how to trust others to do their work well. Instead of devoting time and attention to training employees, providing them with the information they need, they hover over everything they do, demonstrating a lack of confidence in their ability and making them, unintentionally, dependent. Are you a micro-manager or a hands-off type? Or do

you practice situational management, providing the right level of supervision depending on the circumstances?

Ask yourself these questions:

Do experienced employees get the same level of direction as brand-new employees?

Do you ask to review every step in a job and often visit employees at work to check on them, whether problems have existed in the past or not?

Do you insist on reading and

reviewing every piece of writing that goes out of the department on the assumption that you—and only you—know what to say and how to say it?

Are your ideas the only ones implemented and does your voice dominate meetings?

"Yes" replies suggest you need to learn how to better balance your management, offering direction when the need exists, but otherwise allowing your employees the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

2.14 How do I keep enthusiasm high during tough economic times?

During tough economic times, employees will worry about their job security. If you know members of your team will be laid off, let them know as soon as possible.

Employees should not leave the office uncertain about their position unless it is absolutely necessary.

When decisions about layoffs take too long, and employees aren't given the information about what is happening, negative feelings toward the organization develop.

Employees who survive layoffs experience negative feelings as well. Be aware that they may be upset; give them the time to readjust.

If you can help those laid off to find new positions, do so. Not only will it make you feel better but it will also make the survivors feel that you truly care about those who were let go. This can go a long way to taking the edge off of anger with the organization. Those who stay will know that you and the organization are concerned about everyone's future.

2.15 How do I keep plateaued employees motivated?

Plateauing is basically what happens when an employee reaches the highest level he or she can go in the company. There are no more opportunities for advancement—no chances to grow or to be challenged. Plateaued employees feel completely frustrated by this apparent lack of control over their careers; they frequently don't put in the same effort; their morale declines; they are tardy or stay home. If an opportunity for another

job presents itself, they will take it.

Meet with your plateaued employees, and let them know that their situation is not unique. If it is not due to their own competencies but rather is a result of actions taken by your firm to achieve competitive advantage, let them know. They may want promotions, but your employees can't be made promises that you cannot keep. Promotions, however, aren't the only way out of plateauing.

As an option, offer a lateral transfer or sit down with the employee to redesign or restructure his or her

job. This not only solves the problem of repetitive routine but also lets the employee know that you have confidence in his or her ability to learn and master new skills.

Tell Me More

Career plateauing stems from two situations:

1. Structural plateauing stems from the lack of any place higher within the organization to go. This is a situation that happens to everyone sooner or later. But given today's lean

organizations, it is happening sooner for a larger number of people. There are just more people available to fill fewer vacancies due to downsizing. The result is that many talented, hardworking employees do not have the same opportunities they once had to climb the corporate ladder.

2. Content plateauing occurs when an employee knows a job so well that it no longer is challenging. After

a few years in these positions, they have no interest in going to work. The jobs are often entry-level or other lower-level positions. Everywhere else the holders of these jobs see changes occurring, but their jobs remain the same. And there is nowhere within the organization a higher position to which they can go that would offer the challenges they need.

Talk to the employee to determine why they feel they have plateaued.

Determining why can help you determine a solution. Sometimes, just talking about the problem—letting the employee know you are aware of their frustration and dissatisfaction—can help. Often, an employee just needs to be able to redirect energies and thoughts to get off the plateau. By talking—and listening—to your employee, you can help him or her sort out his or her feelings and reach some decisions about how he or she can become more satisfied.

By being supportive and by working to redesign some jobs, you can improve the quality of work life for

your employees—and as their morale goes up, so will the productivity level in your department.

2.16 How can I counteract the negativity of a few employees?

If you can do so, get rid of overly negative employees. See if you can transfer them to another department that will provide a more positive environment for them. If this can't be done, and you can restructure the work to allow this possibility, isolate them so they have as little contact as possible with the rest of your staff.

That will enable you to handle the symptoms of the problem. You still

have to get to the cause. To do that, you need to sit down with them. Deal with their gripes if they are valid, and make sure that the other staff members know that you've done this. If the complaints aren't valid, don't just ignore the issues. Talk to those with grievances and explain the situation. Explain, too, to the staff that the complainers have no reason to whine or gripe. More than likely, most of your employees have found these employees' continuous complaining as annoying as you have.

But don't stop there. Meet with all your other workers to determine if

they have any gripes about either you or the department. Focus on any real problems that might cause poor morale. Show your entire department that you want to keep them happy if you can.

Tell Me More

Sometimes long-term attitudes may be held secretly by staff members. Open meetings enable them to express their feelings. Probe to find out why such attitudes exist. It may be based on past bad experiences with the company, circumstances that no longer exist. If the cause of

negativity stems from a "them versus us" thinking, you will have a much more difficult time changing their feelings. Change won't happen overnight, but demonstrating common interests and concerns can help overcome the attitude.

2.17 How can you motivate an employee who has reached the top of her salary range and is not qualified for promotion?

Some companies raise the maximum salaries in their ranges periodically to keep up with the cost of living. They can then give raises to people who have reached the previous ceiling. Other companies respond on a case-by-case basis, raising some individuals' salaries by special permission rather than a change in

classification. Besides an increase in base pay, some employees may be eligible for increased commissions, bonuses, or overtime pay.

When such options are unavailable, nonfinancial incentives become more important. People can be motivated by nonfinancial motivations if you give them something they really want. They may seek praise or increased employability through access to additional training, or a challenging assignment. Search out your employee's interests, determine what will turn him or her on, and proceed accordingly.

Employees can also be motivated by such things as increased vacation time, better retirement benefits, more opportunity, training, mentoring, affiliation with your company's top teams, quality of work life, flexible work schedules, and exposure to high-profile people and projects.

2.18 How can I motivate part-time workers and temps?

It's hard to motivate contingency workers but it is possible. To begin with, you shouldn't overload them with grunt tasks. It's a temptation to assign all low-level work to part-time and temp employees. Don't. Find out what specialized skills they have and take advantage of them.

Avoid confusion about their work assignments, too. For instance, make clear to these individuals who is allowed to give them work

assignments. If it will facilitate their work, assign them a fulltime worker to be a mentor. The part-time employee will feel more like a part of the team and the mentor will feel good about the added responsibility.

Tell Me More

If possible, give temporary employees work that taps their experience. If you have an assignment that involves filing and photocopying, don't ask for a seasoned project manager. Keep in mind that temporary work has evolved in the past decade or so,

and it is not uncommon for a company to bring in a temporary CFO for a major initiative.

Be clear to temps, too, about their responsibilities. Let them know what they will be doing before they arrive, not after, and let them know to whom they should direct questions. Because contingent workers are new to the office, they'll have more questions than full-time employees will. Don't just leave them hanging. Not only should you or another be there to answer questions, you should try to anticipate them as well.

In other words, treat your contingent

workers just as you would any other employee.

2.19 How do you keep an employee who was passed over for a promotion motivated?

Find out why the employee was passed over. Often the reason is easily explained and understood. For instance, a promotion in a warehouse might demand a knowledge of computers, which your excellent worker may lack. Assure him or her that these skills can be acquired and then proceed to set up a training and development effort so the individual will be ready for the next opening.

In the interim, keep giving the employee plaudits for his or her good work. Get the employee involved in interesting projects. Be supportive. Once the initial disappointment passes, the employee will be as productive a member of your department as in the past.

2.20 How do I create an atmosphere of openness and trust in my staff?

Openness and trust take time to develop. You can't make it happen by edict or one or two acts.

Start by having an informal discussion with your employees. Ask them what you can do together to change the climate from what it is to what they need and you would like it to be. Then take steps to implement change. For instance, if people want to be more informed about corporate plans, then meet regularly

with your staff to share information.

Here are some other steps you should consider:

- Encourage feedback in meetings.
- Avoid arbitrary decisions.
- Only promise things you can deliver.

Tell Me More

In your day-to-day relations with your people, encourage them to contribute their ideas—and listen. If

their ideas have promise, talk them out and implement those that will work. Explain why others wouldn't work.

Avoid arbitrary decisions unless they are absolutely essential. If possible, explain the reasons behind them. If your decisions appear arbitrary, your staff will trust you less.

Actions like these, practiced over time, will increase the trust of your people and establish the climate you want.

2.21 How should I respond when an employee says to me, "That's not my job"?

Since you know from past experience that you will get a negative reaction, present the assignment in as positive a manner as you can. Let the employee know that you have confidence in his or her abilities, that he or she is the best-qualified person for the assignment. Get the employee to suggest ideas about how to do the assignment. If his suggestions seem reasonable, give him the opportunity

to handle the work as he wishes. This way, he may become more interested in doing the work, and will become part of the solution instead of an additional problem for you.

If the employee refuses to take on the additional work, make clear that this refusal will be noted in the next performance review. In today's lean organizations, it is imperative that all employees willingly lend a hand when necessary, performing beyond their job description.

2.22 How can I encourage employees to use their initiative?

When staff members bring you a problem, don't solve it. Instead, ask what they think should be done. Don't accept "I don't know." If time allows, ask them to think about it and come back with suggested solutions. Hold staff meetings for the purpose of identifying problems and reaching solutions. Ask your staff what they know about the situation and then have them suggest possible solutions or approaches.

Never deprecate an idea from one of your employees. Even if the idea is not good, use the Socratic approach to enable the originator to think things out until a better approach evolves. If the idea is good, praise it. Make a fuss about it. Let others know where it came from.

Seeing their peer's creativity recognized will encourage other employees to put their thinking caps on and offer ideas to improve operations.

2.23 How can I motivate offsite employees?

Offsite workers have to feel as if you care as much for them as for those on site. Toward that, you need to interact in person whenever you can. Without personal contact, misunderstandings are more frequent. If you can't meet in person regularly, schedule regular telephone calls with each offsite employee. Set up an agenda for these calls to ensure that you cover all those subjects you intended to cover when you made the call. Know your offsite employees' schedules so you can

reach them via phone in an emergency.

Tell Me More

Just because offsite employees aren't around doesn't mean they shouldn't get coaching and periodic assessments and the annual appraisal. The same procedures used for onsite employees should be applied to offsite workers. Goals should be set and a means of monitoring performance should be determined. The offsite employees should come into the office for reviews and receive feedback on

performance. If problems are evident, then action plans need to be set to turn around performance. Coaching or counseling can be done on the phone but is better handled in person. So a worker whose performance isn't up to par may have to come into the office regularly until the work meets standards.

If no improvement is evident, you may want to bring the employee back into the office to see if this leads to the improvement you want. If it proves either unsatisfactory or the employee prefers to work at home, then you may have to terminate the worker.

Invite offsite employees into the office for staff meetings. You don't want them to feel that their status causes them to miss out. Don't ask them to attend only business meetings—invite offsite workers to social events on site as well.

What if you have a concern about an employee's performance? Ask yourself if he or she needs the camaraderie of the office to produce at the level you need. Telecommuting may not work for every person, even if it may work for his or her position. Remember that your earlier decision to allow the employee to work at home isn't carved in stone.

This same advice applies to anyone who is part of your team but, due to reorganizations, is located on another floor or in another city or even in another country.

Chapter 3: Conflict Management

3.1 Is there such a thing as "good" conflict and how can I take advantage of it?

Conflict is a natural consequence of human interaction. Put two or more people in a room for any amount of time, and disputes are likely. When individuals clash, combatants can become so concerned with defending their turf that they cease communicating. Mutual distrust can build and working relationships may be irreparably damaged.

However, managers can use

conflicts productively, converting them into opportunities for creative problem solving (the task of reconciling conflicting visions forces us to think creatively) and improving decision-making skills (entertaining other points of views to make better-informed choices). Conflict can be an excellent way to identify problems before they grow larger and more disruptive and, more important, find effective, efficient solutions.

Your responsibility is to encourage this positive or constructive kind of conflict. You want opposing parties to debate freely and passionately while respecting the legitimacy of

each other's point of view. The end result may be more efficient or more effective ways of getting the work done.

Even constructive conflict can get out of control. To reap the benefits of constructive conflict yet avoid the repercussions that can result from encouragement of different viewpoints:

- Identify common goals.
- Clarify, sort, and value differences.
- Gain commitment to change.

Tell Me More

Identify common goals. As differences arise, remind the parties of their common goal or mission. Stay away from personality issues. Rather, ask the individuals to review their goals to focus solely on shared or compatible ones. Once the goals have been identified, the group can move on to discuss how these goals can be shared.

Clarify, sort, and value differences. While contrasting viewpoints will surface, so will evidence that the participants have much in common.

This commonality should be emphasized.

Gain commitment to change. Goals may be shared but the means of reaching them may vary. You want to reach consensus on the best way to move forward toward achievement of the shared goal.

When new ideas are presented to your team, encourage members to play devil's advocate. Run meetings so that participants don't feel uneasy about pointing to what is wrong with a favored idea. Attendees should feel an obligation to identify anything that may be wrong with a favored

idea before it gets final acceptance.

When you suspect employees are afraid to disagree with you, tell them you'd like to hear their point of view. Don't kill a messenger who brings bad news. On the contrary, make heroes out of employees who see challenges before you or other staff.

3.2 How can I help employees with a personality conflict get along better?

So long as the individuals collaborate or cooperate with one another, there is no reason to intervene. If you must step in during the early stage of a disagreement, your intent may be only to remind the two parties how their behavior can easily escalate into angry words that will make it more difficult for them to work together in the future.

Further, point to how the

organization expects collaboration and cooperation from its employees. Disagreements can add to the tension in a workplace that is already stressful. Within a department, coworkers may choose sides either in a personality conflict or a dispute over an issue, complicating the situation. Remind them, too, that positive work relationships can make their work more satisfying and pleasant and much less stressful.

Tell Me More

If this reminder is sufficient, and the

two parties reach a compromise or agree to disagree in a manner that does nothing detrimental to the work environment, you need to do nothing more. If they continue to spar with one another, then you need to get tougher, pointing out to both how a continuation of their behavior will be reflected in their next performance assessment. Behavior that intrudes on department performance like this demands action—possibly including termination of one or both parties if they can't learn to work more cooperatively together.

You may also want to offer to mediate between the two parties if

the problem demands the
involvement of a third party.

3.3 How do I go about mediating a dispute?

You have to step in as a mediator when the confrontation not only keeps the two parties from working well together but also creates disruption in your department.

Mediation is a five-step process:

1. Identify the source of the conflict.
2. Look beyond the incident.
3. Look for solutions.
4. Identify answers that both

parties can support.

5. Reach agreement.

Tell Me More

1. *Identify the sources of the conflict.* The more information you have about the disagreement, the more you can help your employees resolve their differences. To get the information you need, ask each person how the argument began. Your intent is to give each party

to the conflict an opportunity to share his or her side of the story. This will enable you to better understand the nature of the situation, as well as prove your impartiality in the conflict. As you listen, demonstrate that you are actively listening by nodding your head and periodically saying "I see" or "Uh huh."

2. *Look beyond the incident.*
It isn't always the situation but the parties' perspective on the situation that causes

the anger to fester and ultimately leads to a shouting match or other visible—and disruptive—evidence of a conflict.

As mediator, try to get the two individuals to identify the real cause of their difficulty. Ask, "What do you think happened here?" Or, "When do you think the problem between you two first began?"

3. *Look for solutions.* After you have each party's perspective on the conflict,

the next step is to have each individual identify how the situation could be changed. Your goal, again, is to get the disputants to share their opinions: "How can you make things better between you?"

Listen to their responses. Look for solutions that would steer the discussion away from finger pointing and toward a resolution of the differences between the disputants.

4. *Identify answers that both*

parties can support. You want to identify the course of action that is most acceptable to both parties and, as important, truly doable. You want an answer to the following questions: "What action plan can you both put in place to prevent a similar conflict from arising between you?" "What will you do if a problem arises in the future?" You want to reach the kind of accord where the answer to the latter question is, "Discuss

it."

5. *Reach agreement.* As mediator, you want to reach the point where your employees are able to shake hands and agree to one of the solutions that was identified in the discussions. To be sure that the two understand each other, it might be wise for each to paraphrase what the other has agreed to, in your presence.

Critical to your success in mediating

any dispute is your ability to remain neutral.

Being neutral means not voicing an opinion, ensuring that everyone involved in the conflict is heard, and preventing one party in the conflict from attacking the other. You need to choose your words carefully so that you do not seem to be supporting one side or another. You also have to keep confidences—you can't tell one side something that the other has told you in confidence.

3.4 How can I get things back on track after I have an argument with an employee?

Conflicts don't arise without cause, and they usually don't disappear until that cause is addressed. If the conflict isn't resolved, or at least its effects aren't tempered, then the conflict can return and even escalate.

Consequently, to get things back on track, you have to attempt to put the conflict behind you, which means putting an end to it. To accomplish

this:

- Make an effort to understand the other person's viewpoint.
- Look for a basis of agreement.
- Find a solution.

Tell Me More

Make an effort to understand the other person's viewpoint. Whether you are upset with another person or that person is angry with you, the same advice is applicable. You need

to hear out the other person. Ask why she thinks that way. Even paraphrase what was said to be sure that you understand. It doesn't mean that you agree, only that you now know where the other individual is coming from.

Look for a basis of agreement. You may not agree with the other person's viewpoint, but you need some starting point for discussion. It may be solely that the other person is upset by your behavior or that you are angered by his. Don't dredge up past grievances. Rather, acknowledge a problem and a need to improve your relationship.

Find a solution. The third and final step is to show your willingness to close the gap in thinking or otherwise eliminate the differences between you. This means identifying a solution that is acceptable to both of you.

Thereafter, treat the other individual as you would if no conflict had arisen between you.

3.5 How do I prevent disagreements from escalating into violent incidents?

If an individual has a predisposition to aggressiveness and perceives the workplace as a hostile environment, experiencing stress from a disagreement can trigger violent behavior.

Become sensitive to the levels of stress your employees are under, recognize danger signs, and address issues of stress and anxiety before they become dangerous to you and

coworkers. Intervene when conflicts arise, and look for win/win solutions. Support a corporate program of zero tolerance for threats.

Further, refer troubled employees to your firm's employee assistance or counseling program. Some companies have set up threat management committees. If your firm has one, report threats, wherever they come from, to the committee for immediate action.

Tell Me More

To keep a conflict from escalating

into violent behavior, you have to spot the conflict. Some will be overt, from an obvious or identifiable cause; others may be covert, from a less obvious or apparently unrelated cause (like conflict among employees due to a perception that their manager's treatment is discriminatory). Whatever the nature of the conflict, you need to monitor the climate at work to identify the conflict before it gets out of hand.

If you see evidence of some conflict brewing, then you need to investigate the conflict. Take time to find out the real cause of the conflict, who is involved, what the key issue

is, and what its actual and potential effects are. See the situation from the other people's viewpoint instead of making a snap judgment. Look to see if you can handle the conflict or if some third party needs to become involved, or, most important, if one or both parties involved in the conflict are so inflamed that the conflict represents a danger to innocent bystanders. If that is the case, then you need to report the situation immediately to the Human Resources Department.

Danger is most evidenced via threats from one or both parties. The focus of the threats will be

determined by the nature of the conflict. Two coworkers may get so riled up that they hurl threats at one another; an angry employee may hurl warnings against you, another supervisor, or the company's senior management; or an employee may be receiving threats from a spouse or other family member. Such conflicts must be reported immediately not only to the Human Resources Department but also to your organization's Security Department, if you have one.

If the threat comes from outside the organization, security measures must be taken to prevent access to

the organization's premises. If the company has a no-threat policy, and threats hurled are punishable by termination, then Security needs to be advised that the guilty employee is no longer to be allowed on company premises. If the antagonisms appear intractable, then you may want also to alert the police.

If you look at violent behavior, you can see a cycle. It begins with the occurrence of a stressful event in a person's life. The stressful situation can involve frustrations, annoyances, power struggles, insults, threats, assaults by others, or job changes,

including disciplinary actions and termination. What might be a precipitating event for one person may have little or no impact on another. Awareness of an employee's past work behavior and any episodes of violence will enable you to assess the risk for violence and take suitable action.

3.6 What can I do to address conflicts with other managers within my organization?

Your first goal should be to avoid such conflicts. But should differences arise, your second objective should be to resolve the problem before it escalates and impairs your ability to work together.

The problems usually fall into four categories: communications, turf and territory, professionalism, and interpersonal issues. Conflicts can arise between you and another

manager when messages are distorted by jammed communication channels or by a third person in your organization who distorts your comments either consciously or unconsciously. Turf battles arise over areas of responsibility, as one manager, like a gang leader, rumbles to protect the boundaries of his or her authority. When one manager treats another with little respect, then the first match is lit that can make ashes out of a positive work relationship between the two managers. Finally, differences—from gender to ethnic to personality issues—can trigger

conflicts.

Different problems demand different solutions. Here are some possible solutions:

- Use professional courtesy.
- Establish a common ground.
- Watch your mouth.
- Ask for help.
- Mirror the other person's movements.
- Make small talk work for you.

- Use humor.
- Avoid hostility by reframing the conversation.
- Confront the issue privately.
- Know where boundaries start and end.

Tell Me More

Use professional courtesy. Brusque demands of a colleague can only alienate him or her. Worse, it can seep down into the two departments and ultimately the employees behave rudely to one another.

Establish a common ground. This bit of advice might seem manipulative, but rather than criticize your colleague, even if justified, flatter him or her. Probably there is something that he or she does that justifies a compliment. Use it to smooth the waters between you and a rigid or negative or otherwise unpleasant peer, and lay the groundwork for a better relationship in the future.

Watch your mouth. Don't say anything about a coworker that you wouldn't want to have repeated by someone else.

Ask for help. You can even go so far as to admit your own short-coming in the process. You can defuse a conflict by making the other party seem superior to you.

Mirror the other person's movements. If you and a peer are having words, you can defuse the conflict by subtly copying the other person's gestures, even his breathing. Rephrasing or restating the other's words works the same way.

Make small talk work for you. Build connections with your colleagues based on personal interests, not just

professional needs. Your common interests are another common ground for a more positive relationship in the future.

Use humor. Humor can be a powerful weapon for building allies, particularly when it is used to show others that you don't take yourself too seriously. Besides, a shared laugh is comparable to a favorite song, book, movie, or Broadway show—building rapport between people.

Avoid hostility by reframing the conversation. Your colleague is short-tempered and is always ready

for a fight. You can let the individual's hostility trigger your own anger or you can paraphrase his or her remarks to prove that you were listening to the complaint, add a sympathetic comment that does not take sides, and then continue the conversation.

Confront the issue privately. If you must confront a coworker, do so in private—not only away from your mutual staff members but other members of senior management. Raised voices have no place in the hallways of an organization or even in a management meeting. After realizing that three of her senior

executives had territorial issues and lacked the professionalism to resolve these themselves, one CEO chose to bring in an outsider. The new manager was hired as referee, a role the CEO didn't have the time to assume herself.

Know where boundaries start and end. You may be above issues of turf, seeing territorial battles in your organization as petty, willing to let others operate in your turf without permission, but others may not be so open-minded. If your intrusion into another's territory is likely to trigger a conflict, respect their boundaries and get off their turf immediately. If

you need to go into another's area of responsibility to accomplish an objective, speak to him or her first. Either ask the person to cooperate by doing the work for you or get his or her permission to do the work even though it falls within his or her territory.

3.7 How can I resolve conflicts within my team?

Team members must be able to work together effectively. Working effectively, however, means seeking the best solution to a problem under discussion. This can trigger disagreements. As a good manager, you don't want disagreements to escalate into unpleasant conflicts. On the other hand, you don't want your team's members to fail to pursue different solutions to a problem because they think such action will trigger conflicts. Failure to express different opinions and

defend them can prompt groupthink, which can put an end to any creative thinking within the group.

You can confront the disputants in the hope of getting them to recognize how their behavior is interfering with the team's mission. This is a response that works if the team is composed of members who report directly to you but less likely to be effective if it is made up of individuals from different areas of the organization.

Or you can refocus the group's attention on the operating rules members agreed to use to achieve

its goal and, more important, on the goal itself.

Tell Me More

Refocusing the group's attention on its ground rules—which include how disagreements will be handled—and the importance of the mission to the team's members or corporation as a whole, ensures an end to unpleasant behavior associated with disagreements yet permits the airing of different viewpoints from team members.

A ground rule related to

disagreements, for instance, might be: The team will allow each member the chance to talk, and will hear out other members without interruption. Another might be: The focus of the team will be on its mission; the group will not be distracted by side issues.

Finally, you need to set up a ground rule that relates to how decisions will be reached. For instance, you might all agree that disagreements will be resolved by vote, slowly eliminating items until only one workable solution remains.

To help the group formulate ground

rules that will keep disagreements from interfering with the team's goals, ask the group's members to consider what behaviors will detract from the team's mission and what behaviors will contribute to its achievement. Critical to conflict management is raising the question early on: How will we handle conflicts and disagreements among us? Keep in mind that differences may arise about the team's mission, how to achieve that mission (the tasks), and the dynamics of the group itself.

Input from the team in addressing these issues in the ground rules will

support your subsequent actions as leader—and will ensure member support in the event that a difference gets out of hand and two or more team members bring personalities into their disagreement.

3.8 When I hear rumors that an employee is angry with me, how do I deal with him?

Seek out the person and ask him or her about the rumor. If the individual denies the rumor, there is nothing more you can do. On the other hand, if the person acknowledges that he or she is angry with something you said or did, then you need to get the person to elucidate. You need to have a sense of the true source of the difference that could become a conflict between you.

When you understand the nature of the problem, you will be able to discuss how the situation can be remedied. Hear out the other party. Don't interrupt. When you interrupt, you tell the speaker that you aren't really listening. You've already prejudged him or his viewpoint and you see no reason to hear him out.

Nor should you jump ahead with your angry coworker and assume that you both will never lunch together again. Paraphrase what you heard. Ask the person if you are accurate in understanding his complaint. Show a willingness to understand. When your peer tells you, "You don't

understand," don't respond, "Of course, I do." Rather, tell the individual, "I want to understand."

Tell Me More

If the real problem seems to have nothing to do with what the individual is saying, probe more deeply to get the person to expand on his or her comments. Once you know the true nature of the dispute, you can refocus your mindset to defuse the situation. It's not you versus the other person but rather you trying to come to grips with a difference that needs to be resolved in order for a

positive relationship with the other person to resume.

Toward that, direct the discussion to new behaviors. If it is possible to do as the person requests, do so. If you can't help your colleague as he or she wishes, what can you do? You both have to decide how to prevent a recurrence of the situation that brought you to this point in your relationship. You might also want to apologize if you find that you were in the wrong. If the upset is due to an omission or commission on your part, admit your mistake and ask, "What can I do to make it up to you?"

If you agree to your colleague's request, keep your promise. Each time you promise but then fail to do as you offered, you lose a little of the respect of others, until you will have none left.

3.9 When should I seek help in resolving conflicts between my employees?

There are some circumstances in which you really should seek help. For example, if there is a threat of violence, if you've tried to mediate and failed, or if a major corporate issue is involved.

Tell Me More

If you are to resolve conflicts between your employees, you need

to have the trust of the parties involved. If that trust is lacking, it is unlikely that mediation will work. No matter how you promise to be flexible in working with the disputants to find a mutually acceptable solution, they will go into the mediation process with doubts about your neutrality.

Can you remain neutral? That is the question you need to ask yourself. Here are some other questions to ask. If the answer is yes even to a single question, then you should consider going to Human Resources or seeking another third party to mediate the conflict:

- Do I have preconceived views about the people I have been asked to help?
- Do I have preconceived ideas about the type of situation I have been asked to help with?
- Is a close friend or relative involved?
- Does my job make it difficult for me to remain neutral?
- Is there no way to deal with these relationships so that everyone feels I can still be

of help?

- Do I feel I need to stick up for the underdog?
- Is corporate policy involved, and if so will I have to defend that policy?
- If the individuals involved have ideas that I think are wrong, will I speak up?
- If I think the plan won't work or won't last, will I say so?
- Does any group I belong to make it hard for me to look neutral?

- What if a party in the conflict becomes angry enough to threaten violence, will I speak up?

3.10 How do I handle my boss if she is a bully?

There will be occasions when you and your boss won't agree. The key to surviving these situations is not to let them "get to you" personally. Your goal should be to maintain a harmonious working relationship with your manager, even in moments of high stress or confusion about your authority.

What if your boss is impossible to work with? If in good times and bad, your boss can be too temperamental or engages in regular shouting

matches with you and others and, in your opinion, it is impossible for you and your manager to have a healthy, harmonious working relationship most of the time, if at all—then it may be time to look elsewhere for a job.

Before you take that step, however, you may want to take the situation to Human Resources. In presenting your situation:

- Stick to the facts.
- Provide insights to help your manager rethink the logic behind his or her case.

- Know when to back off.

Tell Me More

Stick to the facts. Base your case on numbers, events, or documents that can be objectively studied. You may see your manager as a bully but don't cast aspersions or take potshots before Human Resources. On the other hand, you should be prepared to answer questions from the Human Resources Department, the degree of its doubt dependent upon your past work relationship with others.

Provide insights to help your manager rethink the logic behind his or her case. Human Resources will be aiming to have both you and your superior rethink the logic behind the situation. Ideally, you should both be willing to see the situation from the other's viewpoint. If you come on too strong, you can make both your manager and the Human Resources Department deaf to your side of the situation.

Some managers may be bullies but unaware of their behavior. You don't need to face yours with that allegation. Such a term will act like a match to a stack of kindling. If it

doesn't ignite the kindling, it will set the stage for a major conflagration in the future.

Know when to back off. Is it clear that your manager will continue to behave as he or she has? Further, can you see that the Human Resources Department will not intervene? They often take the manager's side, especially if his or her department's performance is exceptional, and it is a matter of one person's word against another. Then you may have no other option but to move elsewhere within the organization or leave unless you are willing to jump when he or she says

"jump" and take his or her verbal abuse.

3.11 How can I tell the difference between personality conflicts and conflicts due to misunderstandings and true work-related problems?

Conflicts can arise from misunderstandings or from different view-points on how to resolve a real operating problem. Conflicts from communication gaffes can be put to an end when the confusion with the message is clarified. Work-related differences tend to disappear when

the problem disappears. While one or the other party may still think he or she had the better solution, generally any negative feelings dissipate over time. That is, so long as the conflict goes no deeper than the operational issue.

Personality conflicts seem to go on and on. Someone's words or manner just seem to get at you. Or your words and manner get at him or her. Everyone else may be able to work cooperatively with you both, but you two just can't get along with each other. One of your employees, for instance, may do his job in an acceptable fashion yet complain and

question every word from your mouth. Or an employee may have worked well with every other supervisor yet makes one mistake after another under your direction.

3.12 What should I do if I am caught in a personality conflict?

Here are some suggestions:

- Be self-introspective.
- Accentuate the positive.
- Talk to the individual.
- Keep communication channels open.
- Treat everyone alike.
- Agree to disagree.

Tell Me More

Be self-introspective. Step outside of yourself to see what is the root cause of the personality conflict. As a manager, you aren't immune from errors, so you may have made a mistake in your dealings with the person, whether employee, colleague, manager, or customer. Could that be the cause of the personality conflict? On the other hand, could your work or communication style be so different that you have no choice but to clash?

Accentuate the positive. If the individual is making an effort to work cooperatively with you, despite differences in outlook, demonstrate your appreciation of the effort. If it's your manager, let him or her know that you welcome the effort.

Talk to the individual. A frequently overlooked tactic is to talk to the person in a mature fashion. Talk in a frank but non-threatening manner about the relationship between you.

Keep communication channels open. You can only do further harm to your relationship with an employee, coworker, or manager by

cutting off communication, even if it is only about work.

Treat everyone alike. If your conflict is with an employee, don't single this person out for any better or worse treatment than other employees. If the conflict is with a peer, be as cooperative with this individual as other colleagues.

Agree to disagree. If all else fails, you may want to meet with the individual to agree that you have innate differences but that you will put these aside and work together. Just as talking out the problem may reveal that your manager doesn't

know that her behavior is making you uncomfortable, or that you don't know something you are doing bothers a colleague, agreeing to disagree may likewise get you past the personality conflict. In focusing on work, you and your manager or coworker or employee may, in time, create a productive partnership that overrides the personality difference.

3.13 How do I cope with someone who becomes angry with me and loses his or her temper before others?

Don't get angry yourself. This may be difficult to do but it is absolutely essential if you're going to calm the other person down. Don't interrupt. Let the individual vent his or her feelings. Once the individual has his or her say, the person may be more prepared to listen to you and your side of the disagreement. You may want to defend yourself or your

company, but it is better to stay quiet until the person has calmed down by saying his or her piece.

Pause once the person is through. Use your eyes and face to say to the other party, "I hear you and I want to help." Mirror the individual's position and posture, if possible. Getting on the same physical level as the other person can help to build rapport. Sit if he is seated. Stand if he is standing. When it is your turn to respond, speak in a calm voice. Don't rise to a screamer's level. Instead, cause him to lower his voice to your level.

Tell Me More

While the individual was yelling, you should have been listening. If you are going to offer possible solutions, you have to know exactly what has angered the other party. If you don't try to interrupt the other party, you will also be sending another message—a nonverbal one—that you are interested in his or her opinion and he or she can trust you.

When you finally speak up, make an empathetic statement. Say something like, "I can see why you feel that way" or, "If I believed

that..., I'd probably feel the same way as you do." Don't sound patronizing. Resist the temptation, too, to accept responsibility on your organization's part or another employee's as a way to put an end to the confrontation. It will only create further difficulties.

Rather, ask questions. Your intent is to determine the nature of the problem. Sometimes, the comments made by the other party are only a smokescreen. Or the other party isn't as correct about the situation as he or she thinks.

3.14 Is it always wrong to express my own anger?

No. Sometimes, controlled anger can make clear how important an issue is. I know a manager who doesn't get angry at any of his employees when they make a mistake. Rather, she focuses on the situation itself, shouting about the problem the mistake has caused, demonstrating how important the error is and thereby encouraging more care by her employees in the future.

This isn't to say that you can't get

angry at an individual. If you think that seeing your anger will serve your relationship well, then expressing anger, in a controlled manner, may be helpful. It communicates your displeasure about something.

The key is to sustain control over your anger. You can yell and scream—but such behavior will only make you look overly emotional and unprofessional. Ideally, rather than lose your temper, express your feelings of anger: "I feel angry because...."

Controlling your temper involves four

steps:

1. Recognize that you are angry.
2. Identify the cause of your anger.
3. Understand why the situation produced anger.
4. Deal with the anger realistically.

Tell Me More

If you let yourself get out of control, and exchange angry words with

either a customer, your manager, or one of your employees, you only make those parties uneasy. Your angry words won't change the minds of these parties. You aren't listening to what they are saying, nor are they listening to you.

Better to become analytical during such situations. Everyone has what he or she believes is a good reason for behavior that looks irrational, childish, or worse. Ask yourself what the other person's justification might be. Still, if you think you can blame another for your loss of control, forget it. You are the only person who is in control of your emotions.

And you only injure yourself when you relinquish your control over your emotions. Which means you aren't as likely to win. Anger will get in the way of your rational thinking; it will keep you from seeing the picture more clearly—maybe, even recognizing some positive points that the other person is making.

If you do lose your control, consider what happened. Evaluate your reaction. Learn to be an observer in your own life, and make a commitment to do better the next time. If there is someone who can get your goat, no matter what you do, and—worse—this person seems

bent on doing it as often as possible,
then learn to distance yourself from
him or her.

3.15 How can I recognize my hot buttons?

Since shouting matches take two, you need to be alert to the hot buttons that can anger you—that can make you a party to a shouting match. What situations or individuals trigger feelings of vulnerability or helplessness, or the desire to defend yourself against them and others? What individuals or situations ruin your day, add to feelings of stress, and leave you feeling angry with the world? Ask yourself, "When I am having a good day, which of my colleagues or

employees can turn my outlook from upbeat to gloomy or, worse, antagonistic?" Or, "Who would I like to give a piece of my mind to and why?"

Be honest with yourself. If there are others in your life—in the office or at home—who don't appreciate everything you do for them, and that fact always gets to you, recognize that this is one of your hot buttons. If your own manager is demanding work from you and continually makes corrections, often unnecessary ones, that is one of your hot buttons. If there are situations or individuals about which

we regularly complain, they represent hot buttons.

Tell Me More

If there is no workable solution to a problem, you need to learn to laugh at the behavior or event rather than obsess about it. Learn to flow when your hot buttons are triggered—don't let them make you tense or irritable.

Awareness of your hot buttons will give you extra control over your emotions. You can assertively tell the other party how he or she has made you angry, move on to discuss

the problem—and, if possible, find a solution to which the other party would be amenable, and prevent a recurrence of the situation since its effect on your emotions was made clear. The person may not agree with you about the seriousness of the disagreement or even accept your recommended solution, but he or she should respect your honesty about your feelings.

Win or lose about the issue itself, expressing your feelings can have a more healthful effect on you than either smothering them or blasting them out.

Chapter 4: Meetings Management

4.1 Why do meetings start late, drag on forever, and fail to accomplish anything?

Successful meetings are brief, focused, and productive. They happen by design, not by inadvertence. When meetings are run efficiently and effectively, they can begin on time, accomplish the goals for which they are being held, and end on time—and maximize human effort.

How can you maximize the benefits of meetings? By setting ground rules

when you first begin a series of meetings. These guide-lines can, then, be used to control fractious behavior when it occurs.

Among the questions that such ground rules should address are the following:

- Where and when will meetings be held?
- How will the need for emergency meetings be handled?
- How long will meetings last?
- How will decisions be

reached?

- How will the team work with other groups within the organization?
- Who will be responsible for preparation of meeting minutes?
- Who will handle communication with senior management, if need be?
- How will the team handle conflicts and disagreements among its members?
- Will the team evaluate each

session after the fact to help improve subsequent sessions?

Tell Me More

The nature of the meeting will determine the questions raised and their answers. A meeting of staff members headed by you, for instance, will require fewer questions than a cross-functional group meeting in which the heads of various areas of your organization are represented.

When you serve as meeting leader

or chair, it's your task to work with participants to set the ground rules. To stimulate discussion, you might come with some questions prepared in advance. For instance, you might ask, "What was a major problem with the last meeting you attended? What could we do to avoid that problem this time?" Or, "How can we be sure that we stay focused on the agenda?" Or, "What will enable us to manage the discussions without over-controlling the flow of ideas or information?"

Don't prepare the ground rules on your own. Even if you are meeting with your own employees, and you

have every right to set the operating rules for the group, the participants are more likely to follow the rules if they had a voice in their creation.

When attendees help write the meeting guidelines, there is greater commitment. Members who don't follow the ground rules are likely to feel group displeasure, which for many is worse punishment than any one-on-one criticism from you.

Here are some sample ground rules:

- All meetings will begin and end on schedule.
- The position of chair will be

rotated.

- Discussion time will be limited to that set on the agenda.
- Meetings will be held every second Tuesday, from 9:15 to 11:00 a.m, in the conference room.
- Three days prior to the meeting, members will receive a copy of the agenda and any handouts to read and come prepared for the discussion.

- The focus will be on issues, not personalities.
- Only one member will talk at a time.
- Decisions will be made by consensus.
- The group will evaluate each meeting to determine progress toward its objective and the quality of the meeting itself.

Such rules will mean nothing if they aren't followed. If you find they aren't, you, as a team leader, can

interrupt the meeting to remind a member of the meeting's guidelines. If you are the meeting chair, you might prefer to take the offending member aside during a break or after the meeting.

You also have to follow the rules yourself.

4.2 When should I hold meetings?

A meeting is a management tool. Like any tool, it needs to be used when it can be most effective. Meetings are best used in the following situations:

1. *You need a new approach to a problem.* By bringing together a group of your employees or colleagues, you hope a creative idea will be generated that can address the problem.
2. *You need information that*

others possess. The situation is so complex that you require a broad range of knowledge, so insights from more than one person are needed.

3. *You need the participants to understand the solution you plan to apply. Your intention is to communicate your solution and the reasons behind it.*
4. *You have a solution to a problem but you aren't sure it is the right way to proceed. A group meeting*

is the quickest way to get feedback on the validity of your idea.

5. *You want to make members feel like a team.*

A meeting can be a good setting to help your staff members better understand each other and build rapport among your employees.

6. *You want to increase the likelihood of the plan being implemented successfully.* Involving your employees in the decision

will make them more interested in seeing the plan succeed.

7. *You need more authority than you possess to proceed.* A cross-functional group is needed, with participants from various areas of your organization.
8. *You want to share responsibility for a decision or plan.* If a mistake comes with a high cost, or the action you are considering has a high risk, you may want to involve

others to share in the responsibility.

9. *You have time and believe that using it in deliberation of a number of good ideas will ensure that the best one is chosen.*
10. *You want to use the meeting as a learning opportunity.*

All these are reasons for using meetings.

Tell Me More

Despite our lean organizations, there is no question that meetings continue to be a popular way in which work is done. Still, used indiscriminately, meetings can take up as much as 30 percent of your workweek. Already, senior managements spend almost half of their week in meetings.

So when faced with a choice, if you or a staff member, working independently, can accomplish the same goal, there is no point in calling a meeting. If you need information from another person, you can get that information via telephone, on e-mail, or over lunch or in a one-on-one meeting. It's even possible

today to get a virtual group together on a corporate network for a one-time exchange of information. The decision itself and implementation of that decision may not demand a group effort.

4.3 How do I keep control of a meeting?

A strong leader knows that when one of the meeting members makes an inappropriate comment such as, "Howard, you are so naive and this idea of yours is really stupid," he or she needs to immediately exert control over the group: "Hey, Peter, that remark was uncalled for. Let's keep this meeting on a professional level, not a personal one." A strong leader won't allow such a remark to be endorsed or sanctioned by others, either. He or she doesn't wait for others to shake their heads in

silent disdain for the inappropriate outburst—or, worse, nod in agreement.

Body language is also effective in controlling meeting behavior. If someone makes a scathing remark that is unjust or inaccurate in response to a remark from one of the participants, a strong, disapproving look back to the member may be effective. It may not be necessary to call the speaker to account. If criticism of the behavior is needed, it should be delivered calmly and with eye contact.

When participants at a meeting

respond nonverbally to another member's comment—say, scoffing or rolling their eyes when a junior member makes a remark—a strong leader addresses the behavior either verbally or nonverbally. He or she might say, "Is there a problem, Peter, with John's remark?" The leader—and team members, too—can show with questioning looks that belittling attitudes just aren't appreciated and that they don't share that same, unjust opinion.

A good leader publicly apologizes for any derisive remarks. "Linda, I'm very sorry that remark was made. It was totally uncalled for, and we

welcome your ideas."

The leader's role is to create an environment where ideas are viewed fairly, no matter who contributes them, and where the group's energies are positively and productively focused.

Tell Me More

A variety of situations can arise when you chair a meeting. Here are some guidelines to help you, as chair, to facilitate discussion:

- *Ask for feelings or opinions.*

For instance, you might ask one team member who disagrees with another's suggestion what is the matter with the idea: "What brings you to question Joe's idea?" Or, you might query, "What do the rest of you think of Joe's idea?" Better yet, "Who has another suggestion about how we should proceed?"

- *Paraphrase what others are saying.* This technique can help clarify any misunderstandings, including misunderstandings that may

prompt angry words about another member's remarks. Just the act of paraphrasing the comment may make an angry team member realize that she is overreacting to the statement of a coworker. As a team member, you may also want to paraphrase some remark to ensure clarification for the group as a whole: "Let me see if I understand your position. Are you suggesting that . . . ?" "What I am hearing is. . . . Am I right?" "Let me restate the last point you

made to see if I understand."

- *Ask for a summary.*

Periodically, you might want to stop the discussion to review conclusions reached. Not only will this keep your team on course, but it also allows the group as a whole to catch its breath if it was a heated discussion.

- *Ask for more concrete examples.* This moves the discussion from the abstract to specifics, from an exchange of information to

specific actions the team can take to move forward.

- *Question whether the group has reached consensus.* Periodically, the team may seem to have reached the point where it is ready to make a decision on an issue. At that point, you may want to call for a vote to see if you are correct that the discussion is over.
- *If the group feels further discussion is needed, then allow that.* However, if the group seems as if it can't

get over this hump, then you may want to ask, "What do we want the end result to be? What is it we are trying to accomplish here?" Focus the discussion on critical issues.

- *Call for action.* As a leader, you are always moving the team toward completion of its mission. That will demand that you monitor the discussion and, whenever appropriate, ask, "How do you think we should proceed?" Or, more specifically, "Darlene, how

would you suggest we proceed?" Or, looking to the group as a whole, you might comment, "I'd like your suggestions on possible ways we can get started. ..."

- *As suggestions are made, put these on a flip chart for later discussion.* Ideally, wait until all the ideas of the group have been put on the chart before discussing any.
- *Suggest the next step.* In the interest of maintaining team momentum, you will have to

put an end to conversations and move along to the next item on the agenda or the next step toward achievement of the mission or objective related to the team project.

- *Stay flexible.* The closer you get to the end result, the more likely you will encounter differences of opinion—so, the more flexible your agenda should be in order to allow enough time for discussion.
- *Support a team member.*

You may need to make supportive statements to get members of the team to share their feelings: "Grace, you've had your chance to share your opinion. Let's hear from Barbara now."

- *Confront disagreements.*
How you confront disagreements will depend on the degree of conflict and the stage of the team's mission in which the conflict arises. But it is imperative that you act immediately when conflict arises. For instance, Helen is sitting

quietly in her chair, obviously upset. You might say, "Helen, you seem upset by what you have just heard. Could you share your concerns with the rest of us?"

- *Give all a chance to speak up.* The majority of the team seems ready to come to a final decision. But there are two members who aren't supporting the decision. Open disagreements and even hostility are impeding the team from making a decision. Then you need to

give those opposed to the proposed actions a chance to have their say.

4.4 What are my responsibilities as group leader?

Besides facilitating group discussions, as a group leader, you are also responsible for:

- *Preparing a written agenda.* Make sure each member receives it before the meeting. Bring extra copies to the meeting for those who forget them.
- *Making sure the room is comfortable.* Ensure

adequate seating, lighting, temperature control, and ventilation.

- *Providing all the necessary materials.* Place as many materials at each seat as is sensible in order to save distribution time later.
- *Ensuring that the meeting starts on time.* Reward those who arrive on schedule. As you start the meeting, preview the agenda with the group. Create a clear mental image of the specific outcome desired on

each item so you'll all be working toward the same outcome. Then move through the agenda in the sequence specified.

- *Monitor nonverbal communication.* Besides facilitating verbal discussion, look at body language. This will tell you, even more than people's words, how members are feeling about the group's progress. If you read boredom or hostility or conflict in people's body language, you may want to interrupt the discussion to

address these feelings
openly.

- *Provide interim summaries.*
During lengthy discussions, summarize the group's progress to that point.
- *Create a positive climate for members to communicate openly and honestly.* Your actions may speak much more than your words. So model the behavior you expect to see in your group members.
- *Conclude by summarizing*

the next steps. Make sure that everyone agrees on what was decided and who has what responsibility for follow-up. Document the meeting and distribute minutes as soon after the meeting as possible.

4.5 As an attendee at a meeting, what can I do to make the meeting more productive?

It may not be your meeting, but as a participant you have specific responsibilities as well. You need to:

- Get there on time.
- Sit opposite the leader if possible.
- Respect the leader.
- Come prepared.

- Don't create subconscious, nonverbal barriers to communication.
- Participate.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Be optimistic about the group.
- Criticize ideas, not people.
- Take on a leadership role when needed.
- Follow through on commitments made.

Tell Me More

- *Get there on time.* You'll distract the group by coming late.
- *Sit opposite the leader if possible.* The more visible you are to the team leader, the more attentive you will make an effort to be. And, in the end, you'll find you were more involved in the discussion.
- *Respect the leader.* No off-stage conversations with

neighbors. Likewise, if your own manager is engaging in another conversation when you are making a presentation, you can either ignore it, if it isn't lengthy, or wait briefly to regain the attention of those whose attention is elsewhere. Once you have everyone's interest, you can continue.

- *Come prepared.* Read the agenda; anticipate the needs of the group and bring related information with you if it will help the group.

- *Don't create subconscious, nonverbal barriers to communication.* Be especially careful if you are in the habit of folding your arms across your chest. Sit with an erect posture. Don't slump. Posture provides the context for everything said. Keep your arms on the table. Lean forward slightly with a bit of an angle to your head when you want to express interest. Moving physically closer, even slightly, increases the sense of involvement others get.

- *Participate.* Speak up. Be candid yet tactful. You should participate, but that doesn't mean you should monopolize the discussion. If you are making a comment on every issue, you're probably talking more than you should. It will help if you think not about what you want to say but about what members have to hear. To ensure this, listen carefully to others' remarks. Good listeners are as welcome as active participants. They process the information that

is thrown on the table and, with good analytical skills, often come up with the right solutions when they finally get around to speaking.

- *Stick to the agenda.* Don't use the meeting as a platform for your personal agenda. Don't change the focus of the discussion based on your interests or concerns. Rather than promoting your own ideas, build on others' thoughts.
- *Be optimistic about the group.* Come to the meeting

with a positive attitude about what the group can accomplish and how you can help.

- *Criticize ideas, not people.*
You aren't fulfilling your responsibilities if you don't question statements when it is appropriate, but you should do it in a professional manner. Make your concern clear. Challenge the person by asking, for instance, "what if" questions that reflect your doubts.
- *Take on a leadership role*

when needed. It's not the same as assuming the chair, but there may be critical points during the team's existence during which your knowledge demands you take over and lead the discussion. When the discussion moves on, be prepared to return leadership of the group to the formal chair.

- *Follow through on commitments made.* If few people deliver on their promises, you'll stand out by coming through.

4.6 What is the best way of keeping a meeting from wandering off course?

The secret is twofold: a clearly defined mission and a well-organized agenda.

Clarification of the meeting's purpose at the time you invite members is critical. Attendees need to know why they will be meeting. If the group has a project to complete—the reason for its existence—that should be put in writing, although you may also spend several sessions of

the group in finalizing that mission. But if a meeting is to be ongoing—for regular discussion of operational issues, for instance—that, too, should be clear to attendees.

Whatever the meeting's purpose, there should be no confusion among invitees. A good leader recognizes the value of all agreeing on their destination in setting out on a course. It lessens the need for correcting course—and makes it easier when it is called for.

Preparation of the agenda is, ideally, the group's responsibility, although initially you may have to put one

together. If you've been invited to participate in a meeting and haven't received an agenda, you should ask for one before making a commitment to be there.

Tell Me More

A well-organized agenda specifies not only the date and place for the meeting and the starting and ending time and the subject matter to be covered but the amount of time to be spent on each topic to be covered during the meeting. When you allocate time to topics, you establish an explicit weighting of the relative

importance of topics. This ensures enough time—no more and no less—is spent on the subjects for discussion.

The agenda should also note whether any guests are expected—who they are and their roles during the meeting; that is, whether they will be there solely to hear and contribute to the discussion or have been invited to make a brief presentation to the group to assist in achieving the group's mission.

If the participants need to be informed about a topic in order to discuss it intelligently, provide the

information they need in advance of the meeting. To ensure that material gets read, include summaries at the start of lengthier documents to explain their worth. Flag or highlight key parts of documents. If possible, see that there is liberal use of space and headlines in the documents. Also, use double spacing or one-and-one-half spaced typing. Single-spaced reading tires the eyes quickly.

Finally, you may want to notify participants in advance that comments made by people who have obviously not read supporting documents will be ruled "out of

order."

Agendas and advance readings should be distributed to participants at least one week before monthly meetings, at least three days before weekly sessions.

4.7 How can I keep someone from dominating a team session?

When someone is monopolizing the discussion, you need to step in to draw out contributions from the rest of the group. Give the individual time to have his say, then interrupt and ask for others' opinions. While you don't want to put any one member on the spot, you might want to ask Jack or Jill what he or she thought about the previous comments or the discussion so far.

No volunteers? That can happen. Sometimes, a participant may have such a dominant personality that he or she intimidates the other participants so they just don't want to disagree with him or her. They may even feel uncomfortable in the same room with the individual. Under such circumstances, you may want to select someone else to attend your meeting. If you can't do that, then you may have to speak to the person privately.

A little conversation on the side can help to put an end to negative behavior by a member when the member fails to take heed of the

leader's reaction—in words and body language—to dysfunctional behavior.

Tell Me More

Let's assume that someone has gone further than just disagree with someone's comment, even said something like, "Jim, I never knew just how limited your thinking was until now." Then you might say to the group, "I'd like to hear Jim out." Or you might remind the attacker not to prejudge.

If the attacker is attributing the

member's comments to an issue of turf or some other questionable motive, you might say to the person, "We're interested in what Jim has to say, not why he is saying it."

Let's assume that the attacker has a political motive for his or her remark. Further, you suspect the group agrees. Under such circumstances, as meeting chair, it doesn't pay to ignore the remark. You might want to ask the person outright if he or she might be defensive or concerned about the life expectancy of a "sacred cow." You might even go as far as one operating group, which has a stuffed toy resembling a cow

and the "sacred cow" is passed to participants who exhibit signs of trying to keep certain topics untouchable because they are politically sensitive.

If none of these tactics works during the meeting, then you need to meet with the offending member(s) between meetings. Remind him or her about the ground rules by which the meetings are run. If the behavior is interfering with the open, positive, productive environment you want, you need to make them aware of it.

4.8 How can I encourage all to participate at a meeting?

You want to get participation from all, which means building the confidence of quieter members. You want to draw them out, but you don't want to make them feel uncomfortable in the process. So you might wait until the person ventures an opinion, then provide positive reinforcement. Next time, ask the person to comment on another's remarks rather than ask for an idea. Follow up with praise. Once you think the person is

comfortable with the group, draw him or her out by asking directly for some suggestions.

4.9 What can I do to get people to meetings on time?

If you have told participants that a meeting will start at a specific time, then proceed accordingly. If you start on time—no matter who is missing—you won't be reinforcing tardiness. To make that message clearer, close the door of the meeting room when the session begins. This will draw greater attention to latecomers.

In writing your agenda, you may want to put the most important

agenda items first. Items of particular interest to potential latecomers should also be at the top of the agenda. The trick is to get them to be prompt because it's in their own self-interest rather than because you want them to.

If there are some participants who are chronically late, you might want to become friends with their assistants. Ask them what they can do to alter their managers' schedules or remind their managers of the meeting time. If your meeting ground rules also include promptness, you can apply peer pressure on the latecomers.

Tell Me More

If it's a serious problem, you might want to put the issue on the agenda, as a problem-solving agenda item requiring the group's attention.

A private conversation with offenders might also be tried. Tell them of their importance to the group dynamic and your interest in doing whatever you can to have them there for more of the meeting. If the latecomer is one of your employees, you can make it a performance management issue. Warn latecomers that continued tardiness will be reflected

in their performance assessment.

Here's a final tip from managers experienced in holding meetings: Schedule your meetings to begin at odd times, like at the quarter or half hour. A meeting that runs from 10:15–11:00 a.m. may encourage more effort to get there on time, especially if other meetings are held on the hour.

4.10 What can I do to improve decision making at a meeting?

There is no perfect approach to decision making. However, you can improve the final decision by

- Ensuring all facts have been identified.
- Clearly defining problems or issues.
- Inviting outside viewpoints as well as hearing out member viewpoints.

- Identifying alternatives so team members know what they are voting for.

Tell Me More

It may help to improve decision making by also watching the following:

Agreement on the decision-making process. Too often, problems arise after the fact. The team assumed that the final decision would be handled democratically, in an election—at best, via consensus—while the meeting chair intended to

make the final decision himself or herself. In the team leader's mind, the purpose of the meeting was to generate a variety of viewpoints.

Clarity about the group's authority.

Was the group formed to put together an action plan and then see it implemented or was it only assembled to accumulate the information others would need to make such decisions?

Ownership of the decision. This will depend on the first step. If the group will be responsible for the final decision, then they need to review the various solutions to choose the

best. If the group also has responsibility for implementation of their solution, then they need to go over the details and decide what actions they will take. All members of the group must understand the plan. Likewise, interested parties.

4.11 How can I stimulate creative ideas?

There are numerous ways to stimulate creativity including: brainstorming, brainwriting, and using analogies or metaphors. Before you begin these techniques, try restating the problem. For instance, complaints have been received due to delays in shipments from the warehouse. We could state the problem as "identifying ways to minimize customer complaints," but we might also come up with creative solutions if we looked at "how to ensure customers have accurate

information about date of product delivery" or "how do we keep customers informed about the status of delayed orders."

Still another way to generate ideas is to question our assumptions. They may be erroneous, and raising issues that would seem already to have been considered and resolved may be one way to determine some faulty conclusions.

Tell Me More

Most of us are familiar with brainstorming, which is a form of

free association.

Brainstorming is usually done in groups, and individuals call out ideas that are written on a chart. No idea is evaluated until the session is completed. Then the group works on the list, linking common ideas and separating the chaff from the wheat.

Brainwriting is free association done on a piece of paper. You begin with a single word or phrase in the center of the sheet. Over a five or ten-minute interval, you then write down as many single words or phrases that come to you. Where ideas are related, lines can be drawn, and

groups of ideas can be circled to form islands of thought.

Linking the islands generally triggers workable solutions to a problem.

Analogies or metaphors, sometimes just words randomly selected out of a book, can also spark thoughts about a situation. For instance, scrap levels have risen due to lack of training of new workers. You need a way to speed training. Choose an object, like a pen or a book, then come up with some metaphors or analogies to the object, then use these metaphors or analogical thoughts to trigger ideas to solve the

training program. For instance, a book is like a library in that it contains a lot of information. In some ways, experienced workers are a library of knowledge. So why not set up buddy systems for the newer workers to help speed their job orientation? See how it works?

"What if" questions can trigger lots of ideas as can repeatedly asking the question "why" during a discussion. Don't forget who, what, where, and how questions, either, like:

- What would happen if we...?

- How could we arrange the program to...?
- Why did we settle on doing ... this way?

4.12 How can I counter groupthink?

Groupthink is a process of rationalization that sets in when members of a group begin to think alike. It can be fostered by managers who discourage dissent, or it can develop under leaders who offer an employee's idea so much praise that pretty soon everyone is behind the idea. Most of the time, groupthink pops up quickly and wreaks havoc before anyone realizes what's going on.

Part of the problem is that

groupthink, once in motion, generates its own fuel. Usually, the more complex a subject, the more likely groupthink will take over—people are less likely to question an issue when they don't know all the facts. Groupthink is also likely to occur when membership in a group is valued.

There are seven steps to countering groupthink:

1. Reward critical thinking.
2. Do not mistake silence for consent.
3. Divide the group into

subgroups to critique new ideas.

4. Don't state your opinion too early.
5. Give meeting participants time to think through major proposals.
6. Seek wide exposure for new steps.
7. Run a pilot program.

Tell Me More

1. *Reward critical thinking.*

Go out of your way to invite thoughtful criticism of new proposals. As leader, if they are your proposals, you might go so far as to appoint a "devil's advocate" to attack your idea. If one person is given the chance to point out weaknesses, others are more likely to do so.

2. *Do not mistake silence for consent.* Don't assume that quiet or silent members at a meeting are in agreement. As a meeting chair, go out of your way

to draw them into the discussion—even to the point of asking them if they agree with the discussion to date.

3. *Divide the group into subgroups to critique new ideas.* People who are hesitant to speak in large group settings may be more comfortable about sharing their misgivings in a smaller meeting group.
4. *Don't state your opinion too early.* Staff members, especially those new to the

department, will be reluctant to criticize what you have endorsed. If you are serious about getting others' viewpoint, present the idea calmly as one approach. Ask for other suggestions. If you've already decided to move ahead with your new idea, regardless of staff member opinion, it is a waste of time to hold a meeting for the purpose of evaluating the idea. Your goal, then, should be to get the team to come up with ways to

make it happen.

5. *Give meeting participants time to think through major proposals.* After initial enthusiasm wears off, they are much more likely to spot problems and weaknesses.
6. *Seek wide exposure for new steps.* Consider bringing in an expert to analyze your proposal. At the very least, talk to those whom you suspect will be against it. If you cannot convince them of the plan's

merits, maybe it's because it doesn't have much.

7. *Run a pilot program.* If the idea has survived the first six steps, consider running a test before you allocate major funds.

By following these steps, you can motivate team members to express their opinions and you can avoid dealing with groupthink and its destructive consequences.

4.13 How can I work with a group to reach consensus on an issue?

The group's chair or leader has to have the facilitating skills to allow members to tear apart and put back together each and every idea on the flipchart. With each idea, the group needs to try to achieve consensus. When doubts aren't voiced, the facilitator should be observant enough to see nonverbal cues that suggest some members don't agree.

Since this can be a time-consuming process, and an idea may never get

the unanimity that the process is expected to generate, some managers have incorporated a weighted vote at the near end of the process whereby the best ideas are voted on. Slowly ideas are crossed out until only two or three ideas remain. A final vote is used to choose the idea to be pursued.

Despite the effort that goes into consensus decision making, many members of a group come out of the process as disappointed as they might have been had the final decision been made by the team chair. Consensus decision making works only if these three

considerations have been met:

- Each member must feel he or she has been heard and understood by the rest of the team.
- Each member must be able to live with the decision or solution.
- Each member must be willing to pull his or her weight in making the final idea a reality.

Tell Me More

Some individuals on the team may feel nonetheless that the wrong decision is being made. If pressure is exerted on them to give in and vote in favor of an idea, the facilitator must step in. There should be no politicking to force participants to vote one way or another. If the participants aren't happy with the conclusion reached, the team chair can offer the nay-sayers other options. For instance, they can add to the minutes their own dissenting viewpoint. Or they can add a trial period for testing the decision. If the pilot project doesn't work, they may want to go back into committee to

rediscuss the conclusion reached.

They can also step aside, refusing to participate in implementation of the idea if they so wish.

4.14 What can I do to get members to follow through after a meeting?

It may seem simple but the most effective way is to end meetings with a summary of agreed-upon actions, including who is to do what and when. This information should also be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Since commitments made after a meeting can slip participants' minds, you might want to send an e-mail message as a reminder a few days later to communicate to members

how important what they agreed to do is. It helps if you establish a norm within the group of "do it the next day"—members should learn over time that they should follow up on their commitments immediately after a meeting.

Tell Me More

If nothing happens, you can call to ask if you can help. This is far more effective than calling to say the individual's work is overdue. The offer to help is likely to be turned down, but it should energize the participant to do as promised.

Still no luck? Shame the individual for his or her failure to follow through by including on the agenda for each meeting a status report of all actions agreed to at the previous meeting. No one wants to be reminded in public about what they haven't done.

4.15 How can I skip meetings to get work done without getting flack from the meeting leader?

The simplest way is to send a representative in your place. Ask in advance. Tell the meeting chair that you would like to attend but have some work that must be done immediately. In your place, you would like to send someone who will represent you and therefore your department at the meeting. If you truly mean it, promise to attend the

very next session.

Tell Me More

If the sessions will be ongoing, and you see no purpose in attending the meetings, explain your doubt about your need to participate at each and every session. Offer to be a guest at sessions where your contribution will help the group. And keep that promise.

Most managers will appreciate work priorities as a legitimate excuse for someone's inability to attend a meeting session. If they take issue

with your comment that you don't see a need to attend regularly, agree to attend a few of the first meetings. You may find that your participation is important—if not to the group's efforts, then to your own group and the commitments that it might be called upon to make based on decisions made by the group.

If early sessions prove that you were right—that you weren't really needed—you can go to the meeting chair and repeat your earlier remark. Ask to continue to be kept involved by receiving minutes from future meeting sessions.

Chapter 5: Recruitment, Hiring, Orientation, and Retention

5.1 How can I make sure I hire the right person?

If managers are filling an entry-level position, they should talk to the candidate about his or her accomplishments at school.

Ask candidates, "What do you consider to be your most significant accomplishment." Then ask questions to determine how really significant the accomplishment was.

Need someone with lots of energy? Ask him or her about handling multiple priorities. Would this represent a problem? Ask about

instances in which he or she had occasion to address tight deadlines. Maturity doesn't come with age. It is an outlook. Probe to find out about a candidate's attitudes. Ask a candidate about the most important decision he or she made and how it affected his or her life, or—better yet—if he or she could start all over, what would he or she do. If the person has visions of winning the lottery and going into business with the winning funds, you might want to look elsewhere for that steady, reliable employee you need.

Tell Me More

Past experience will alert you to a candidate's fit within your organization. For instance, if you are looking for a new staff member, you want to know how you and the applicant will work together. Ask the applicant, "Of all the managers you worked for, describe the supervisory methods of the one you enjoyed working for most?" Follow this question with: "You told me about the managers you best liked to work for. What were the worst?" If the applicant has had only one former supervisor, ask him or her to describe that manager's methods and how he or she felt about them.

Answers to these two questions will tell you how the candidate's style of working is congruent with yours.

Looking for someone to be either a manager or an assistant manager or with the potential to become a manager in a short period of time? Again, go back to the past to see how the individual held previous leadership positions. If the individual has had no previous management experience, ask about leadership roles in non-business areas—like in school or in civic groups. Ask not only if he or she handled that role but how he or she behaved in that role. You want someone not only

who could handle a managerial position within your organization but whose managerial approach would fit within your organization. After all, leadership styles vary from autocratic to shared leadership.

5.2 How can I determine what the requirements are for the jobs I have to fill?

You need to talk to the previous jobholder. If there are others doing the job while you are recruiting, you should also observe them at work. Talk to them as well. Talk, too, to people with whom jobholders interact—both coworkers and customers. The more you know about the job, the clearer you are in terms of the requirements of the position you are trying to fill.

Your goal in conducting these

interviews is to learn about key responsibilities, the types of problems jobholders need to solve, the interactions they have with others, the most difficult part of their job, and the skills and abilities they feel are necessary for success.

Such conversations will also enable you to determine if the job has changed since it was last filled. Previous documentation about the job may have to be changed to reflect changes in the job's responsibilities.

Tell Me More

Called "job analysis," this process will enable you to better identify prospective candidates for the job based on their skills and background. Skills, abilities, knowledge, and attitudes—all are critical to the success of your new hire. Each should be identified by you. Examples of technical skills and abilities are welding, drafting, accounting, list management, and copywriting. Nontechnical skills and abilities include planning, interpersonal relationship building, and decision making. While there is much that a new hire will be expected to learn once on the job,

there is also information about the field he or she should bring to the company to do the work.

Attitude focuses on issues of motivation and culture. For instance, a successful salesperson has to be aggressive, to the point that he or she is willing to work on commission, and also find satisfaction in meeting daily with strangers and interacting with many different types of people. If your organization is organized around teams, you would want to hire a team player, someone who would work well within a team setting. A manager would have to be willing to share responsibility, letting

employees participate in decisions, to fit best within the organization.

Once you have an understanding of the criteria important for job candidates, there is one more step. Put the information on paper, in a job description. The job description doesn't just summarize the duties and responsibilities associated with the position. It also specifies the skills and aptitude needed to do the job (education, previous training and experience, and motivation). All this information is needed to ensure that you select the right person for each job opening.

Ideally, you want to hire people today who will bring with them competencies that enable them to work for you as the job becomes more complex. Consider how the job might change. Talk to those within your organization who might have insights into how these changes affect the job. More important, how will these changes impact the competencies needed of those who hold the job?

In this way, you will have a much fuller picture of the ideal candidate for the job—a "success profile" for the present and future.

5.3 What constitutes a well-written job description?

A well-written job description has six components. These include:

- Job title.
- Statement of objectives.
- Major responsibilities.
- Job requirements.
- Preferred criteria.
- Relationships with others.

Tell Me More

Job title. If the person were introduced to others, how would you identify him or her? "Sam, I'd like you to meet Sue Ellen, our new copyeditor," or "Marie, here's Larry, our new team leader." If the department within which the individual works is critical to the work done, then that would be part of the title as well. Sue Ellen may be copyeditor for the marketing department or the publishing division. Larry may head up a team in the warehouse or he may be team leader of a product development

group.

Statement of objectives. Here's where you indicate the relevance of the position to the organization. How does this position support the department's mission or the strategy of the whole company?

Major responsibilities. Beginning with the most important work functions, you list all those tasks that the individual must do on a regular basis. The specificity of the tasks is a reflection of the level of the position. The higher the position, the broader the description. For instance, a key function of a plant

supervisor might be to review production goals with team members at the beginning of each shift, whereas a key responsibility for manager of systems might be to stay abreast of latest technology and application to current systems.

Job requirements. Here is where you would list the standards that all job candidates must meet to be considered for the position. What technical skills are required? How about the ability to manage multiple priorities? A manager should have a track record of coaching and developing others. All the criteria should be work-related. This is

critical since the list will be used not only to make the best hiring decision but also to assess the jobholder's performance; differences between you and the jobholder can lead to grievances and even court cases unless they are clearly related to the work to be done.

Preferred criteria. You might want someone with a college degree. If you are hiring a manager, you might prefer someone with five years' previous experience in a similar company. If you see new procedures in the future, ones that many firms already have installed, you might want someone with experience with

them or at least a history of flexibility. None of these may be essential for successfully doing the job, but they may be qualities that you would like all candidates to possess.

Relationships with others. To whom should the jobholder report? Other relationships should also be indicated—for instance, participation on internal project groups or maintenance of ongoing relationships with representatives of key customer account.

5.4 What can I do to make help-wanted ads more effective?

Brevity is the secret to effective help-wanted ads. There may be numerous responsibilities associated with the vacancy, but the ad should list only the key ones. This increases the likelihood that those who respond will be able to do those tasks most critical to job success.

There's another reason, too, to focus on only a few requirements. The more requirements you list for applicants, the fewer responses you

will receive.

Tell Me More

Besides the job requirements, state some of the advantages of the job. Play up, in particular, the opportunities that come with the job—like the chance to head up a project or company-paid training, or corporate investment in a degree program. If your firm has a good reputation that might attract people who know about it, you may also want to include its name in the ad rather than use a box number.

In writing your ad, you may want to consider not only the content but also the general appearance of the ad. I'm not suggesting you pay the added cost of a display ad. Yes, they are likely to get you more attention, with their use of artwork, various typefaces, even the corporate logo, but display ads aren't categorized by type of job. Consequently, job seekers have to read through all the display ads to find yours.

Rather, you should add more white space to your classified ad. The white space will set your ad apart. Let's assume that you are looking

for a marketing manager. Here is an example of how you should prepare your ad:

Wanted: Marketing Manager

Growing training organization requires marketing manager to oversee full line of e-learning courses. Job requires:

Degree in marketing.

Five years' experience in marketing.

Supervisory experience.

We offer:

Generous salary and
benefits package.

Opportunity for career
growth as firm expands.

Elegant office setting.

Send resume and salary
history to Box 328, This
Paper.

5.5 How do I best use Web ads to recruit people?

The secret to a well-written online ad is the use of "key words"—that is, words based on those factors critical to the job being offered.

While use of the jargon of the field may eliminate some good prospects, those best qualified for the job should be familiar with the language.

Here are three other rules, courtesy of Peter D. Weddle, publisher of *Weddle's: The Newsletter for Successful Online Recruiting*:

- Use intriguing headings. To identify suitable phrases, put together focus groups of new hires to review postings for searchability as well as the words that will interest prospective candidates.
- Summarize the job in the first five lines.
- Identify pay range within the first five lines.

Tell Me More

To describe job responsibilities, rely

on the job description you developed to provide the information you need. But think as if you were writing a recruitment brochure, hyping the copy up. Since Web ads will generate many more responses than print, inclusion of salary is critical to ensure that you don't get inundated with unsuitable responses. As with print ads, be aware of postings that are too broad or too narrow. Too narrow, and applicants won't be able to find your ad. Too broad, and the posting will be listed with a bunch of jobs too similar or sufficiently similar that your position will be lost.

5.6 How can I effectively prescreen candidates?

If you have done your homework, you have developed an up-to-date job description that makes clear the specific type of education and/or experience candidates need. As you review the resumes you receive from prospective candidates, consider those qualifications. Now quickly scan all the resumes for those items. Only those that get through this screening should be put aside for further consideration.

Tell Me More

Consider a telephone call to the prospect. Since resumes generally don't tell the whole story for most candidates, it is not a bad idea to put all potential interviewees through this further prescreening.

Before you pick up the phone, prepare specific questions that reflect issues that are not clear or extensive enough in the resume. List them on a paper with room to write the responses. For instance, the resume says, "Improved productivity by 15 percent." Ask, "How did you do this?" Then tell the applicant a little about the job (not too much, just enough to expand on the ad). If you

are both interested in an interview about the job, then you can invite the applicant to come in.

Whatever your decision, you need not mention it on the phone. Thank the individual for his or her time on the phone and promise to get back to the candidate if he or she becomes a serious candidate but explain that you will be in touch with other candidates and that you can't promise anything.

5.7 What can I do to make a candidate feel more at ease?

A nice way is to go out and greet the applicant in the reception area rather than have him or her brought into the office by your assistant. Consider taking the applicant on a tour of the workplace as you walk to your office.

You might open the conversation with a noncontroversial question such as, "Did you have trouble finding our building?" If the candidate was referred by a friend or a

business associate, you might want to talk a bit about that person.

The resume or application may also suggest a means of breaking the tension. For instance, "I notice you went to New York University? Did you ever meet the communications department head, Professor Austin?" Or, "I see you live in Morningside Heights. Have you ever eaten at Olympia Kitchen?"

Referring to past successes noted in the resume, either in previous jobs or outside the work field, also helps.

Tell Me More

The one thing you shouldn't do: Challenge the applicant as soon as he or she has sat down by asking the question, "So why do you think I should give this job to you?" With that single question, you will close down any further dialogue with the candidate. On the defensive thereafter, the prospect isn't likely to do more than answer questions asked. To gain the insights you really need to make a good decision about someone, you will have to drill like a dentist, a process that won't be pleasant for either you or the applicant.

5.8 What are the benefits of working with search firms?

Sometimes using such a firm can speed up the hiring process and help free up the manager's time. Some search firms and headhunters specialize and therefore have good inside knowledge of a field, including individuals who might be interested in a move. If the position is hard to fill, search firms can be more effective than other recruiting strategies.

Recruiting services can also conduct

confidential searches.

Tell Me More

While those are the benefits of using a search firm, it is important to realize that use of a recruiting service is the most expensive strategy you can use. A fee of 25 percent to 30 percent of the annual salary is fairly common. Since employment services only make their money if they can make a match, some firms will work harder at persuading you to accept their candidate than at understanding your needs and the qualifications of the

best candidate to meet those needs. They may even go so far as to mislead a prospective hire about the job you are offering to get him or her to accept the work. Consequently, you may get the candidate you want but he or she may move on, even turn to the search firm for placement elsewhere.

Few recruiting firms give a no-cost, full-replacement guarantee for the hire that doesn't work out.

5.9 How do I hire the best recruiting firm?

Before you choose a recruiting firm, ask some key questions:

- What is their past experience?
- What positions do they specialize in?
- What do others who have used them say?

Tell Me More

If they pass your review, sit down to discuss fee limits and the terms of guarantee you want. Spell out clearly what forms of compensation will apply to the fee: bases or special incentives.

So far, so good. Next, be very specific about your needs. Let the recruiter know:

- What are the qualifications for the position?
- What are the expectations for the new hire?
- What is the salary range for

the position?

Give the firm some insight into your organization's history and culture as well. The more the recruiter understands about you and your needs, the better the prospects for a good match.

Most important, from the very first meeting, make clear to the recruiter that it's his or her responsibility to present prospective candidates to you. You make the final decision.

5.10 How can I increase the number of prospective candidates available?

If you advertise, think about display ads and not only in local newspapers. Advertise in journals in the field. Check out Web sites that specialize in the field, too, and place ads there. Consider, too, your own corporate Web site.

Because recruitment information can be lost on your company's Web site, you may want to have a separate recruiting Web site created for

human resources. If you can't do that, see if you can have designed a special recruiting page and put a link on the home page so applicants can easily access it.

Those organizations that have the most success with Web page recruiting are the well-known corporations. Job seekers turn first to them. But you don't have to work for Oracle or Dell or Yahoo to attract job candidates via the Internet. To draw candidates to your Web site, add your Web address to offline help-wanted ads.

And, of course, don't forget asking

your current staff for recommendations. Most people in technical and other specialized work have friends and acquaintances in their own field. They belong to professional associations and attend conventions. Ask them for referrals. Some companies even have formal programs that offer cash bonuses to employees who refer new hires.

Not only will employee referral programs help you identify hard-to-find recruits, they also are one of the most cost-effective ways of attracting new talent. The best approach is to pay 50 percent of the award thirty days after the employee

has started and the remaining 50 percent after the referral has completed a probationary period, from three to six months later.

Tell Me More

Here are some other strategies to find candidates:

Job fairs. Job fairs attract a diverse group of people. By careful selection of the fairs in which you participate, you can identify those prospects for hard-to-fill positions.

Alumni associations. These

organizations put out periodic publications to their former graduates and can be a source to explore for describing your company. Schools also have student clubs and associations of minority and professional groups that can be good sources to notify about job vacancies.

Outplacement firms. Yes, you call these firms in when you need assistance in helping laid-off employees find new jobs. But the larger ones—like Drake, Beam, and Morin, Right Associates and Lee Hecht and Harrison—also are ready to work with companies to place

individuals. So outplacement companies should be notified when you have a tough recruitment situation.

The military. Many people leave the service with a solid background of experience and training in medical, technical, and other skills related to civilian jobs. Military personnel are a continuous available applicant pool since they leave the service all the time. Contact the local military base with your recruitment need. You should also advertise in the *Army Times*, *Navy Times*, and *Air Force Times*, with worldwide distribution, since many people leaving the

service are not tied to a particular geographic area and will go where the opportunities are.

5.11 What are the advantages of recruiting on the Web?

Online recruitment is less costly than its print counterpart, averaging 5 percent of the price of placing a help-wanted ad in a major newspaper for thirty days. Cost is based not on the size of the ad, as with print, but either by individual posting or subscription. Online recruitment also generates faster responses from prospective employees, thereby shortening the hiring cycle. With well-written resumes and job postings, screening

time can also be cut.

Online recruitment can attract passive job seekers. These are individuals who aren't job hunting—they are "just looking"—but may pursue a position if it interests them enough. Finally, online recruitment enables companies to have access to the global workforce. This has proven invaluable with hard-to-fill positions.

Tell Me More

Costs for online recruiting can range from \$100 to \$200 per posting on a

site, to \$500 per month for ten postings plus access to the resume database, to \$100,000 a year for unlimited postings and database access. Some sources offer free trial subscriptions, which enables an organization to assess the site's traffic and decide if it's a good investment.

Think \$100,000 seems a lot? Compare that cost to what your firm would have to pay for a display ad on a metropolitan newspaper. It could be as high as \$2,000 a day, and that single ad might have to run several weeks until sufficient responses were received to identify

enough prospects to begin the interview phase.

What's the downside to recruiting on the Web? Most career sites add listings chronologically.

Consequently, your posting can be lost in a mass of other online ads. To find the position you've posted, applicants will be forced to scroll down a long list of jobs, even with word-search capability.

And while recruitment via job search sites guarantees a heavy and immediate response, this does not ensure the quality of the responses or the seriousness of their senders.

Easy-access resume responses may prompt those browsing the Web site during office downtime, not serious job seekers. The resumes in response to an ad may bury you and the Human Resources Department in replies, but few may meet the requirements you listed in your job posting.

Finally, diversity recruitment efforts may be curtailed since women and minorities tend to have less access to the online recruitment services.

5.12 What are the key employment laws related to hiring?

The five federal EEO statutes that have had the greatest impact on hiring practices are:

- Title VII of Civil Rights Act (1964)
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967)
- The Immigration Reform and Control Act (1990)
- The Americans with

Disabilities Act (1990)

- The Civil Rights Act (1991)

Tell Me More

Title VII of Civil Rights Act (1964). It protects individuals against employment discrimination on the basis of race and color, national origin, gender, or religion. It was the first federal statute to protect against discrimination in employment, and it continues to have significant impact on hiring practices today, prohibiting both intentional discrimination and the use

of seemingly neutral hiring practices that disproportionately exclude minorities and that are not job-related.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967). It prohibits discrimination in employment for individuals age 40 and over. While the statute does not specifically prohibit employers from asking an applicant's age or date of birth, this type of inquiry may indicate a possible intent to discriminate and would be closely scrutinized to determine how related to work the question.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (1990). It prohibits discrimination based on national origin but also requires employers to obtain verification of an applicant's right to work in the United States. Note that U.S. citizenship is not required in most cases. If you impose citizenship requirements or give preference to U.S. citizens in hiring or employment opportunities, you may be in violation of IRCA unless there is a legal requirement for a particular job.

Usually employers will collect documents of verification of the right to work in the United States only

from applicants to whom they have made job offers. But regardless of when you collect this information, the key is to be consistent. If you single out individuals of a particular national origin or individuals who *appear* to be foreign, to provide employment verification, you may be in violation of both IRCA and Title VII. If you decide to collect verification from a particular candidate who "looks foreign" before you conduct the final interview, better collect it from every candidate *before* the final interview.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). This act prohibits discrimination against a qualified

individual with a disability if the individual can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. The ADA covers physical or mental impairments. Physical impairments include physiological disorders or conditions. Mental impairments include mental or psychological disorders such as mental retardation, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

The Civil Rights Act (1991). It allows an applicant to seek compensatory and punitive damages for willful discrimination—for

discrimination based on gender, religion, and disability. It also provides for a jury trial for the plaintiff. This act does not extend protection to any characteristics not already covered under Title VII but it does create steeper consequences—via a jury trial—for employers who violate them.

5.13 What are the ten most common interviewing questions that could cause legal problems?

Unfortunately, there's no neat list of illegal questions. Even if you don't mean to discriminate, the implications of some questions that managers could ask during an employment interview may cause a court to declare them (and your firm) discriminatory. For instance, asking if an applicant can come to work on weekends may seem innocuous, but

courts may rule it discriminatory if your only reason is based on religious belief.

Interview questions must be strictly job-related. Avoid questioning applicants about such subjects as:

- Race, color, ethnic background, or family history.
- Language usually spoken at home.
- Membership in ethnic clubs or organizations.
- Marital status.

- Children's ages or child-care arrangements.
- Spouse's occupation.
- Sexual orientation or preferences.
- Church attended or religious beliefs and practices.
- Nature or extent of disabilities.
- Medical history.
- Age or birth date.
- Arrest records.

- Wage attachments or garnishments.

Also, you cannot ask questions that are asked of one sex only—for instance, you cannot ask only your female candidates if they can type.

Tell Me More

The simplest guideline is to focus on selection criteria that relate to the applicant's qualifications for and ability to do the job you have to fill. If you do so, you'll be heading in the right direction.

For instance, it is legal to ask if a person can meet the work schedule and attendance requirements, but it is illegal to ask specifics about the person's spouse, the spouse's employment, who will look after any children, or any previous medical problems. It is legal to ask about training and experience in the U.S. military but it is illegal to ask about reasons for discharge or about service in the military of other governments or for copies of discharge papers. It is legal to ask about how long the applicant plans to stay on the job or about any expected absences, providing the

questions are asked of both men and women, but it is illegal to ask direct questions about previous pregnancies or possible future pregnancies. Want still more comparisons? It is legal to ask a person's weight or height if either weight or height is a requirement for the job and no one can or has held the job without meeting the stated requirements. But it is illegal to ask about height or weight if there is no job requirement related to these things. It is legal to ask if a person can work lawfully in this country and can provide proof of this *after hiring* but it is illegal to request proof of

citizenship or ask of what country
the person is a citizen.

5.14 What are "reasonable accommodations"?

There are numerous "reasonable accommodations" that employers can make to assist qualified individuals with disabilities in the performance of essential job functions. The following list identifies the nature of accommodations and some specifics. Keep in mind that what might be "reasonable" for one employer may not be for another. These may include:

- Making facilities accessible to and usable by individuals

with disabilities (e.g., installing ramps and automatic doors).

- Job restructuring (e.g., removal of physical activities that are not essential to the position).
- Offering part-time or modified work schedules (e.g., allowance of a day off for therapy).
- Adjusting or modifying selection procedures (e.g., providing a reader or interpreter).

5.15 How do I legally discuss accommodations with the applicant?

Concerns about hiring a person with a disability often centers around the person's ability to perform job duties and meet attendance demands.

While discussing this issue with someone disabled may seem awkward, it can be made a manageable situation if you develop and use a standard set of questions to identify whether or not each applicant is able to perform the essential job functions. For instance, if a job requires lifting heavy objects,

the list of questions might include, "In this job, you will need to lift 50-pound bags of concrete. Can you meet this requirement?" The interviewer simply reads each job function and asks the applicant if he or she can perform the function with or without accommodation. If the candidate indicates the need for an accommodation, the interviewer writes down a detailed description of it.

The ADA outlines several situations that employers may encounter when interacting with an applicant and what the employer may and may not ask. They are:

- If the candidate has a *known* disability (e.g., a missing arm) that would appear to interfere with or prevent job performance, the manager may ask the candidate to describe how he or she would do the task. The focus should be on determining the accommodation that would be needed.
- If the candidate has a known disability that does not appear to interfere with a job function (for instance, uses a wheelchair but the jobholder can sit and do the

work), you cannot ask for a description of how he or she would do the work.

- If the manager suspects a candidate has a disability, he or she cannot ask for a description of how he or she would do the work.
- If a candidate voluntarily indicates that he or she would need accommodation to perform a task, you would be required to get a detailed description of the requested accommodation.

- If a candidate indicates that he or she cannot perform an essential job function, even with accommodation, the candidate would not be qualified for the job.

Tell Me More

ADA guidelines allow employers to ask sometimes how an individual will perform essential job functions. However, under the ADA, the employer is never allowed to ask an applicant about the disability itself.

Among the issues about which you

can't ask:

- Existence of a disability.
- Nature or severity of any disability.
- Prognosis of any condition or disability.
- The need for special leave because of the disability.
- Past worker compensation claims.
- Past, present or future treatment by a medical doctor.

- Use of prescription drugs.
- Treatment for alcohol or drug abuse.
- Major illnesses or surgeries.
- Current state of mental or physical health.
- Physical characteristics (e.g., weight, height).

5.16 How can I probe for an applicant's weaknesses?

Ask questions about areas of past jobs that were likely to have caused problems. Find out how the individual handled them. For example:

- What aspects of your previous jobs gave you the most trouble?
- What are some of the disappointments you have had in your last job?
- In what areas did you need

help or guidance from your supervisor?

- For what things have your managers complimented you? Criticized you?
- What did you like most about your past jobs? How about the things you liked least?

Tell Me More

Note how you can begin by asking about positives, then lead into the negatives. From the answers to the

negatives, you can identify weak points that may be pertinent to the candidate's ability to do the job.

If you feel that an applicant is holding something back in answer to a question, don't ask further questions. Rather, be quiet. It is difficult for most people to tolerate silence. If you don't respond immediately, the candidate may keep talking. After listening to the applicant's response to the question, wait about five seconds before asking the next question. You will be surprised at how often an applicant fills in the silence with something—positive or negative—that adds to

the response.

5.17 What kinds of notes should I be taking during an interview and how should I use them?

Begin with job factors. Using the job description as a guide, note the background of the candidate on each item.

Intangibles are more difficult to note. Stay away from vague comments. List specifics. So, instead of observing that Joe is creative, list examples of his creativity in previous jobs. If appearance is a job-related factor, don't write "sloppy" or

"rumpled." Those are subjective comments. Note, instead, "clothes unpressed, dog hairs, shoes not shined."

Personality factors may also be important to the final decision. Once again, avoid subjective comments. "Applicant appears to lack self-confidence" is an opinion, but the statement "Applicant looked down at the floor during the entire interview and was hesitant in answering questions" is a fact.

Hold off making these notes until the interview is done. Make your notations after each candidate has

left. Give yourself ten to fifteen minutes between interviews to summarize your impressions.

Tell Me More

You write these notes for a purpose: After you have interviewed all the candidates for a job, review your notes to help you make your hiring decision. Compare what you learned to the predetermined criteria. Do you see clear winners at this point? Any clear losers? Organize the information you've gathered into the following stacks:

Winners: These candidates are clearly the best choices for the position. You wouldn't hesitate hiring any one of them.

Potential winners: These candidates are questionable for one reason or another. Maybe their experience isn't as strong as that of other candidates, or perhaps you weren't impressed by their presentation skills. Neither clear winners nor clear losers, you'll likely consider these candidates for hire only after further investigation or if you are unable to hire anyone from your pool of winners.

Losers: These candidates are clearly unacceptable for the position. There is no way that you would consider hiring any of them.

When you have more than one "winner," you may want to conduct a second round of interviews with these candidates. For this round, you may want your own manager to meet with these candidates to gain a fresh perspective.

5.18 How can I ensure that individuals hired fit into our corporate culture?

You want to make the right match, and personality type is as important as job specs or experience. Let's assume that you run a very team-oriented group. You don't want to hire someone who takes pride in his or her individualism. Or maybe your company is more individualist and the candidate has worked previously in team-oriented organizations and thought well of the system. By the questions you ask, you need to

determine if the individual would feel as satisfied in an environment where individuals work independently and if he or she would be as productive in that environment as he or she was at the previous employer.

The questions you ask will tell you whether you and the applicant will make a good match or a mismatch. Find out what the prospect liked best about his or her previous jobs, what he or she liked least. Describe some of the work and ask the applicant how he or she would approach the work. Describe an assignment done by the previous occupant of the job. Ask the

applicant how he or she might have handled the assignment.

Still unsure? Describe your department's culture and ask, outright, how the applicant would feel.

5.19 How can I conduct an effective reference check?

The goals of reference checking are twofold: to verify the information that your candidates have provided and to gain some candid insight into who your candidates really are and how they really behave in the workplace.

One way to encourage a positive response to your query is to have applicants sign an authorization permitting former employers to give information to you. When references know you have this release, they may be more willing to talk.

Tell Me More

A frequent question is "Would you rehire this person?" This question, however, gives those queried an out. "We have a policy against rehiring." So an alternative question might be: "If you were hiring for another company for the position of X would you hire her?" If the answer is no, then you should probe for the reasons why.

Here are other questions to ask:

- How long have you known the candidate?

- What was your work relationship?
- How did the applicant get along with his or her associates?
- How did he or she work with his or her manager?
- What were the applicant's strong points?
- In what areas do you think the applicant needs help or added training?
- What personal attributes strengthened or weakened

the candidate's effectiveness?

- How was the candidate's attendance, punctuality, etc.?
- What were the candidate's responsibilities and how well did he or she perform them?
- Why did the candidate leave the job?

The extent to which you contact references depends upon the position you are trying to fill. For instance, if the person will have

access to sensitive information or money or could do personal harm to the public or other employees, then you might want to do a more substantial reference check than for someone with minimal contact with money, personal information, or customers.

5.20 How do I decide between two good candidates?

Deciding which applicant to hire isn't easy. But you can make a better decision if you separate facts from hunches—not that you should ignore your intuition. It's a good idea to take a few minutes between each interview to jot down what you think are the significant facts and list your hunches too. Both are important. But probably the most significant factor is a candidates' past accomplishments.

People who have succeeded in the past are more likely to succeed in the future. In addition, the accomplishments of which the candidate was most proud give you insights into his or her thinking about the nature of the work. If the applicant is especially proud of an accomplishment that you consider a part of the day-to-day routine, then you may have someone with limited growth potential. On the other hand, if you have someone who has accomplished something truly worth crowing about, then he or she may be worth scooping up.

Tell Me More

Before making the final decision, take a look at the job specifications. Let's assume you are filling the position of office manager. Applicant A takes great pride in telling you that she "kept the work flowing, put out fires, and saw that the work was done correctly." That's what the job calls for. But Candidate B tells you how she cut supply costs by contracting with a new vendor and found a way to eliminate redundancies in her past job. So who do you hire? Candidate A, whose past history suggests she will

maintain operations as is, or
Candidate B, who will likely
introduce new cost- or time-saving
policies or procedures?

Both candidates met the
specifications for the job, but
Candidate B outshone Candidate A.

Let's look at two other candidates,
one who meets the specifications
exactly and another candidate who
has less experience but seems more
interested in the work. Which of
these two individuals would you hire?
Unless the issue of experience is an
imperative for holding the position,
you might be wise to choose the

individual who seems interested in the work—who doesn't see the salary was cut but does see the work as challenging and within her capability.

One frequent mistake managers make in deciding among candidates is choosing someone based on personality or appearance or some commonality. For instance, I knew a manager who hired an assistant manager because he came from the same part of town and went to the same high school. Needless to say, the manager and his new hire didn't get along at all.

If you take an immediate dislike to an applicant yet don't know why, but will have to work closely with the individual, it may be unfair to you both for you to hire the individual—unless you are willing to make a sincere effort to get along.

5.21 What does it mean for an employee to be hired "at will"?

Employment-at-will means that an employee can be terminated without cause. That is, it is the employer's right to terminate him or her at any time with or without cause. But there are exceptions to this. The attorneys of litigious-minded terminated employees will use these exceptions to argue their case. The exceptions include the charge that the employer discriminated against the employee on the basis of the person's age, sex, or sexual orientation; that the

company is retaliating against the employee for having filed a workers' compensation claim, or whistle-blowing, or for filing an OSHA charge against the employer; or that the employee is being discharged just as she or he expects to receive some anticipated financial benefit, like pension plan vesting.

If the plaintiff's lawyer can prove any of these exceptions to the at-will relationship, then he or she may win the case against your firm. Which is why human resources experts advise that managers have a good reason to terminate and that employees be given written warning

prior to their losing their jobs. This is particularly true if termination is due to problem performance.

Tell Me More

At present, most states, but not all, recognize at-will relationships. If you live in a state that does so, your organization can establish an at-will relationship with each and every employee it hires by communicating its status on employment applications, offer letters, and employee handbook, and any other documents that might be found in the new-hire package. Because some

courts have denied companies' right to at-will relationships because it has been too long since employees were told of the fact, firms are also advised by lawyers to issue annual at-will updates for their employees to sign.

The good news with all this is that you need not clarify verbally the work relationship, although you should be prepared to answer questions if a prospective hire sees the phrase and asks about it. The bad news is that whether or not your company has declared in writing its at-will relationship with its employees, you should be prepared,

with documentation, to justify any decision to terminate an employee.

5.22 What do I do if I can't hire anyone from my group of winners?

You need to decide whether you want to go through the entire recruitment process again or choose someone from among your potential winners.

As you look through your potential winners, ask yourself what it would take to make your top potential winner into a winner. If the answer is as simple as a training course or two, then you should give this candidate serious consideration—

with the understanding that you'll schedule the training soon after hire. Perhaps the candidate needs a little more experience before you would have put him or her into the winners' stack. Then you need to make a judgment call as to whether you feel that his or her current experience is enough to carry the person through until the individual gains the experience you are looking for. If you have any doubts, you may want to keep looking for the right candidate. After all, the person you choose will be working with you for a long time—taking the time to find the best candidate only makes sense.

5.23 How can I make a new hire's first day on the job productive?

Rather than leave the new hire with an assortment of brochures and employment forms to complete, and forget about him or her, leaving it to the employee to find work, you should have tasks ready for the employee to complete on his or her first day at work. Once you have "oriented" the employee to the company, then you need to explain to him or to her the work you expect to be done and leave the employee to the assignment.

During the day, you need to be available to answer any questions that may arise as your new hire does the assignment. Since you can't be there all the time, you may want to assign one of your skilled employees to help guide the new hire through this task and others that may arise during his or her first few days on the job.

At the end of the day, you should visit with the employee to get feedback on how that first day went. Is there more help he or she needs? Is the mentor you selected to help your new hire doing the job you expect?

Tell Me More

Because buddies can have a significant impact on shaping a new employee's initial impressions and actions, you need to select employees for this role carefully. Here are some guidelines for selecting someone who over the short term will be the new hire's mentor:

- Choose those who are doing the same work or a similar job or who will be interacting with the employee frequently. Common ground

makes for more productive communications between the two individuals.

- Select people who are skilled but are relatively new in the job. Employees who have been with your firm for a long time may forget what it was like to be a new hire. Employees who have been with the company for eighteen months or fewer generally can relate best to what the new employee is feeling and what he or she needs to know.

- Select employees who have a positive attitude about the company and about their work. This is common sense. You want to build the same positive attitude and commitment in your new hire.
- Select high performers, those who are good at the work. You want as a buddy for your new hire a positive role model.

Before you make the assignment, check with the individual whom you are considering for the role. Be sure

that the employee is willing to do this and fully understands his or her responsibility. Those who demonstrate a knack for this role should get recognition for their contribution.

5.24 What can I do to help a new hire succeed in the job from the first day?

You need to plan that first day and monitor progress beyond it. Leaving new hires to learn on their own what they need in order to do their work is unfair to the new hires. If you don't have a new employee orientation program, start one. If your company has one, think about how you might improve it. (Too many orientation programs are run by the Human Resources Department, which may support new hires' information needs about pay and benefit programs but

do not give the newcomers insight into their work responsibilities, their role within the team, and their new manager.)

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Be prepared for the new employee's first day.
- Complete any necessary forms.
- Review policies and procedures.
- Communicate the company mission statement.

- Outline expectations.
- Take a tour.
- Assign a buddy.
- Keep the positive momentum going.

Tell Me More

Be prepared for the new employee's first day. Don't just see that he or she has office supplies or necessary materials or equipment to do the work. Schedule free time to spend with the new employee.

Complete any necessary forms.

Doing this together will make this part of the orientation go faster.

Review policies and procedures.

You don't want the newcomer to experience information overload, but this is important information that the new hire needs in order to avoid rule infractions and to fit in with the group.

Communicate the company mission statement. Don't just read or give the new hire a copy of the written vision or mission statement. Explain what it means not only to the organization but to your department and, more

important, to the work that the new employee will be doing. Let the new employee know how his role fits into and supports the company's strategic plan.

Outline expectations. Explain to the new hire what he or she will be doing and what your expectations are. Rather than talk about your expectations over the next year, break the timeframe into manageable units—first, a few days, then a few weeks, then months, and so forth. Establish periodic reviews to track progress, and stick to these. Prevent performance problems from developing by being

alert to any training needs or confusions about the work to be done.

Take a tour. Show the new employee around. Introduce him or her to coworkers. Point out where he or she will be working and to whom to go for help. Use the tour as an opportunity not only to make the new hire feel at home but also compliment and build up other employees by pointing out their accomplishments. For instance, consider this simple introduction: "Anna, this is Shari, our newest hire. Shari, if you need any help with our software programs, Anna is the

person to ask. She knows everything there is to know about the software we use."

Assign a buddy. Select one of your staff members to lend a hand when the employee needs it. Be sure that the buddy is agreeable to taking on the task and has the know-how about the job and the right attitude about the work and company to set the newcomer on the right path.

Keep the positive momentum going. Don't limit your orientation program to the newcomer's first day. Praise, encouragement, ongoing training, two-way communication, and

feedback will help to keep the new hire committed.

5.25 When and how should I notify all the other applicants that the job has been filled?

Some organizations tell applicants that if they don't hear from the firm by a certain date to assume they didn't get the job. Others prefer to write or phone applicants who have been seriously considered. Certainly, the latter leaves candidates with a better viewpoint about the firm to which they applied. One warning: Don't notify other candidates until shortly after your new employee starts. If the chosen candidate

changes his or her mind and doesn't start, you then can still go back to the others without having them feel they were second choices.

No reason need be given for not hiring one of the applicants. The most diplomatic approach is to write or say, "One of the other candidates was closer to our current needs." You don't have to explain in what way or to give any specific reason.

5.26 Given the costs of recruitment, how do I reduce turnover?

Turnover is the total number of separations of employees from your department during a given time period. This question raises a more basic question: "What makes most employees leave their jobs? Many managers will tell you that the reason is that the employee can make more money elsewhere, but the truth is, money is rarely the only motivator and it may not even be the primary motivator in most cases.

Yes, unless a company keeps its salary levels fair, it cannot expect to keep employees for any significant length of time, at least not the good ones. But as companies learn during boom times, retention isn't achieved solely by throwing money at employees. Studies show that employees leave for many reasons, and a poor relationship with their manager is a major one. In his book *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay* (San Francisco: BarrettKoehler, 1999), authors Sharon Jordan-Evans and Beverly L. Kaye observed, "People don't quit companies, they quit

bosses." Evidence has shown a high correlation between employee job satisfaction and the relationship between the employee and direct manager.

Tell Me More

Research suggests that it isn't a single factor or initiative that can keep an employee with a company. Rather it is satisfaction with many factors, including:

- Fairness at work: fair pay, performance evaluations and corporate policies.

- Care and concern: career development opportunities and family-friendly benefits.
- Satisfaction with day-to-day activities.
- Corporate reputation: an employer with a strong, capable management team that is financially sound and does high-quality work.
- Work and job resources: the people and equipment to do the work.

Employees want open

communication between themselves and management and the opportunity to gain new skills. They also want work that is fun, interesting, and exciting. In addition, many of today's workers want to work in an environment with leading-edge technology.

As a manager, you can personally influence the turnover within your organization by watching out for the following:

Not carefully assessing the job or applicant. All too often, we idealize a job, hoping to lure a potential candidate on board. Similarly, we

frequently aim for credentials that sound impressive but have little to do with what the employee really needs to do the job. In short, people are hired on false pretenses—offered quick advancement and varied assignments even when this will not be the case. When a job candidate discovers the truth, he or she may remain for awhile but, in time, he or she may begin to search for another job.

Not orienting new employees. Once an employee takes the job, is he or she left to flounder? If so, he or she may find adjustment more difficult—prompting belief that the grass might

be greener elsewhere. People need to know how things work in their new employer and, if there is a problem, who they can turn to for help.

Providing little or no training. We can all stand to learn. But for the new employee, or any employee with a change in responsibilities, training is critical. If you don't offer this training or training that offers increased employability, then you're setting up your employees for frustration and failure.

Not clarifying goals. Too often, employees are overwhelmed by conflicting demands or infuriated by

requirements that appear only when it's too late to incorporate them into their work. People have to know their responsibilities and the priorities that affect them. Have you told your employees? Stop and ask them what they think the priorities are—you may be surprised. If they aren't clear, take the time so that there's no confusion.

Offering unclear or conflicting instructions. Don't assume employees will do the job according to your expectations. Make sure you have told them the parameters to which they must adhere.

Providing no feedback. Employees want to know when they're doing well and want to receive helpful redirection when they're not. You are the major source of that feedback.

Overlooking morale problems. As one manager erroneously said, "Morale isn't my job—getting the work out is." In fact, how that work gets out depends on morale—and the manager who either doesn't notice problems or (worse yet) notices but does nothing isn't doing his or her job. Failure to correct morale problems is a sure way to raise turnover.

Being on the defensive. Do you welcome suggestions? Are mistakes accepted or are employees constantly chastised? Managers who encourage openness and support their employees create a more productive environment.

Being unsupportive of creative thinking. Turnover is a problem in those departments where creativity and new ideas by employees are discouraged because it upsets the status quo.

Limiting rewards to a paycheck. When we think of rewards, we think of money, but requests for more

money often stem from a desire for recognition. Further, money has limited motivational value, and since managers have limited control over this reward, it is important that they know how to use other types of rewards. For example, participation in decision making, training opportunities, chances for choice assignments and travel, and attendance at key department meetings are all rewards that can be used to reinforce positive performance time and time again at very little cost.

5.27 How can I maximize the use of exit interviews?

Find a comfortable place for the meeting. If you like, take the employee out to lunch, even breakfast. Discuss the employee's new plans, and let the person know that you are happy for him or her. Now is the time to let the employee know how much you've appreciated his or her work efforts.

Ask the employee if there is anything he or she would do differently had the employee been manager. Avoid

discussing coworkers but allow the employee to make suggestions for the future, beyond how to best fill his or her now vacant position.

Just as it is important for an employee to leave a job amicably, so, too, should the manager feel that the employee harbors no ill feeling.

Although some exit interviews are not more than a formal parting, you can learn some surprising things from others. Just remember to keep your ears open and your defenses down.

Tell Me More

Here are some sample questions to trigger discussion:

- How would the departing employee describe your company's culture? Will his new employer's culture be similar?
- What are the opportunities for advancement with his new employer? How does this compare with your company, in the departing employee's opinion?
- What did the employee like most about his former job?

What is it about the new job that interests him?

- Are there opportunities for training with the new employer? How could your company offer similar learning experiences?

Ask, too, about how the work could be done more efficiently or effectively, in the opinion of the departing employee. The employee may have been reluctant to raise some of these issues if he or she thought they were a threat to continued employment or might lead to a significant increase in workload.

Use the departing employee's experience in the position to gain insights into how to facilitate the work in the future. Here are some sample questions along these lines:

- Are their redundancies in the current job that we should consider eliminating?
- Are there operating obstacles that we should investigate to smooth the flow of work?
- What skills are most critical to the departing employee's past job?

How has the job changed since the employee first took on the work? Show the departing employee his job description and ask him how he might suggest it be rewritten—not only in terms of job responsibilities but also qualifications.

Chapter 6: Performance Management

6.1 If I give my employees regular feedback about their work, why do I need to conduct formal evaluations?

Formal evaluations provide a framework for discussing the overall work of an employee. The information that comes out can lead to corrections of deficiencies and improved performance. Formal assessments can give employees recognition for past work and reinforcement for continued performance at that level. It can also

identify employees who could benefit from coaching, to build their job skills, and formal counseling if there performance is marginal.

Finally, because appraisals are formalized, assessments are taken more seriously—not only by your employees but also you. The formal evaluation sets a baseline against which your employees can measure their own progress, and it forces you, as a manager, to look at each of your people in an objective manner and to take steps to improve their performance—even encourage them toward achievement of more challenging objectives.

Tell Me More

Both managers and employees dread performance assessments. On one side, employees worry because raises and promotions are at stake, sometimes even their job security. Managers also don't like them, because they are required to judge others. It's particularly uncomfortable when the employees' cooperation and support are necessary to bottom-line success. A good appraisal system relieves the pressure on both sides. When objectives are clear and set by managers and employees working

together, and when they jointly monitor progress toward them, fair and accurate appraisals are almost guaranteed. Good workers get the recognition they deserve, and poor performers learn about problems hopefully before they grow out of control. Identified early, marginal performers can be salvaged through coaching and/or counseling.

6.2 What can I do to be a better evaluator?

The single most important ingredient is the setting of objectives or standards that reflect aspects of an employee's job that contribute most to the overall success of the job and that offer the greatest benefits to the organization. Once you have these in writing, and you and your employee have agreed to them as the basis for measurement over the next twelve months or whatever assessment time period, you need to maintain records based on your observation of the employee's job performance.

Your appraisals must be regularly communicated to the employee, the frequency determined by the corporate appraisal system.

Tell Me More

If you want to become a better evaluator, here are some steps you should follow:

1. Ensure that the employee has accepted the standards or objectives by which he or she will be measured by involving the individual in the creation of these criteria.

2. Maintain records on employee performance, identifying both positive and negative examples of the employee's behavior.
3. Before making an assessment—either the final, end-of-year assessment or mid-year evaluations—review the written documentation. Highlight situations related to the objectives that you believe are important to an assessment of the employee's performance.

4. Don't discuss generalities. Refer to these specific situations to demonstrate key points you wish to make. Give the employee the opportunity to speak on each issue.
5. If the employee doesn't see the seriousness of his or her behavior, point out the implications to the unit's performance or broader corporate mission.
6. Don't avoid an issue because you believe it will raise unpleasantness

between you and your employee. Remember that the point of the evaluation is to help the employee do a better job.

6.3 What criteria should be used in setting performance standards?

Standards or objectives are based on the history of productive workers. Review the employee's job description, assuming it is not dated, and study the department and corporation plans. These should help you to identify goals or standards against which the worker's performance will be measured.

The goals or standards set should be defined in clear and unambiguous terms and with a definite timetable.

They must be measurable, which is easy when the work is quantifiable but more difficult when it is not quantifiable. Examples of non-quantifiable measures are faster than average completion of assignments, introduction of new concepts, and contributions to team initiatives.

Tell Me More

Performance goals are often results that are expected of the employee and critical to the department's operation. *Standards* are usually tied to output and frequently the same

for each employee in the same job. For instance, a standard for copyeditors might be: Edit no fewer than twelve manuscript pages per hour. For a customer service rep: Handle no fewer than twenty phone calls per hour.

You may want to add *developmental objectives*, along with goals or standards. Developmental objectives reflect skills, abilities, or knowledge deficiencies that need shoring up. Let's assume that an employee lacks know-how in statistical analysis. His goal: "to complete a course on statistical analysis by year-end." A goal doesn't have to be

tied to attendance at a course. It could be something like this: "Read *The Effective Executive* by Peter Drucker and identify five ways you can apply the knowledge to interactions with peers. Deadline: February 4, 200X."

If your organization promulgates a number of values, you may want to tie these to your appraisal as well. For instance, your firm might expect its employees to show initiative. This is a value. For a department administrator, the *value-related goal* tied to showing initiative could be: "Develop a users group to increase worker's knowledge of search

engines and identify those most useful for competitive research." For an engineer, it might be "identify less expensive ways to manufacture existing products to increase greater profit margin." If the performance factor is "collaboration," you could measure it by an administrative assistant's ability to "fill in when colleagues are either ill or away on vacation." For the engineer, collaboration might be measured by her ability to "participate in cross-functional projects so they are completed on schedule."

All of these may be used to assess your employees' performance.

6.4 Should I include individual credibility as part of performance management?

Next to their job performance, nothing has more bearing on your employee's influence or stature within the organization than their reputation for integrity and honesty. Consequently, you may want to include, as part of the behaviors that will be assessed, those that protect your employees' credibility. Thus you will discourage your workers from taking any actions that might jeopardize their reputation.

Here are some suggestions that you can make to them:

- Be honest.
- Keep your word.
- Honor deadlines.
- Admit when you're wrong.

Tell Me More

Be honest. If they don't know the answer to a question they have been asked, they should admit it and then investigate the answer. You don't

want them to mislead and thereby misdirect others.

Keep your word. Ask your employees not to make any promises they are not sure they can keep. That way, when they say they can do something, you know they will, and you won't find yourself in a tight spot down the road.

Honor deadlines. If they are not going to meet a deadline, they should let you and their coworkers know well in advance. Ideally, they should mention concern during planning and make contingency plans.

Admit when you're wrong. When you make a mistake, you should acknowledge it. Likewise, your employees. Let your employees know that you expect them, too, to acknowledge their shortcomings, regardless if it is their responsibility or not. When it's not their fault, you also don't expect them to blame others.

6.5 How should I phrase a goal or standard?

Begin with an action verb, describe the immediate results if necessary, include the date by which you want the goal achieved, and define the overall result desired (in terms of quality like greater customer service or quantity like increased sales or reduced costs).

Tell Me More

As an example, the goal might state: "Interview four experts to produce one article monthly in time to meet

the mid-month production copy date to ensure magazine production and delivery to subscribers on schedule." Another: "Review office procedures by July 15 to identify ways to streamline operations." Still another: "Update software programs on schedule as provided by marketing and customer demands."

Ideally, you should have from five to eight objectives. Less than five wouldn't be a sufficient challenge. If there are more than eight, employees might be dispersing energy in too many directions. If you find yourself with more than eight, see if you can postpone some until

the following year.

6.6 How can I get employees to accept being evaluated?

It may help if you remind your employees that such evaluations are part of everyone's job; even the CEO's job performance is assessed.

A more concrete step is to involve the employee in the assessment early on, before appraisal interviews and before you present the employee with the goals against which his or her performance will be measured. Involve the employee in creation of the goals or standards.

Write down the goals, then sit down with the employee to discuss the list. Even better, encourage some or all employees to come to the goal-setting meeting with their own objectives. Those closest to the work often know its goals as well or better than you do, and you do them honor by asking them to participate in setting yearly objectives. It can also be an excellent way to better engage indifferent workers in their jobs.

Tell Me More

It can also be an interesting exercise

for both you and the employee to set objectives independently, then meet to compare and agree upon the final list. If an employee is way off base in what she thinks is important, you can discuss the misconceptions with her, clarifying your expectations of her. In the process, you can also discuss her job in the perspective of the bigger picture—the department or corporate mission.

6.7 What are "stretch" goals?

By suggesting that you add "stretch," your manager is suggesting that you are not setting challenging goals. They are easily reached because they either reflect the same level of performance over the last few years or demand minimal performance on the employee's part. Of course, the more "stretch" you put into an objective, the more resistance you may encounter from an employee. Don't let this discourage you from setting goals with some challenge.

Your manager has a point in suggesting you put "stretch" in objectives set. Just be sure that the stretch is realistic. Too much stretch means that objectives won't be feasible, and employees won't even try to achieve them.

6.8 Are there legal implications in the performance appraisal process?

Yes. Performance appraisals can influence compensation, promotion decisions (and the opportunities to gain promotions through training or a high-visibility project assignment), layoffs (downsizing tied to job performance), and termination for cause. Consequently, appraisals are targets for legal action by disgruntled employees who charge bias in your evaluation or the way you implement the appraisal system.

Tell Me More

It can help you if you are aware of those major employment laws related to performance assessments:

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. This makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee in promotion practices, as well as hiring practices (see [Chapter 5](#)), because of the individual's race, color, sex, creed, or national origin.

The Equal Pay Act. This act

stipulates that employees who perform similar jobs must be paid equally.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). This act protects employees and applicants more than forty years old. It states that employers may not discriminate against individuals in this age group in either hiring or promotion decisions.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Employers cannot discriminate in hiring or promoting the handicapped.

The Vietnam Era Veterans

Readjustment Assistance Act. Under this act, companies with contracts of \$10,000 or more with the U.S. government must take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam era.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This act, as noted in [Chapter 5](#), makes it illegal to discriminate in hiring, in job assignments, and in the treatment of employees because of a disability. It doesn't affect evaluations directly, but it should be considered when managers are

giving a poor evaluation to someone with a disability. Could it land them in court? The answer: maybe, but probably not. The law doesn't allow disabled individuals—no matter the disability—to get away with not doing their work. But every reasonable effort must be made to accommodate the employee's work to the disability.

There are regularly new developments with these laws, including court decisions, that you should make an effort to be aware of. For instance, since passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, overt workplace discrimination has

decreased. So courts now look for subtler signs of discrimination, like the existence of code words that demonstrate a hostile environment for plaintiffs. In *Aman v. Cort*, for instance, two black employees sued their employer, claiming that they had been subjected to an atmosphere of racial contempt and harassment. Blacks at the organization were referred to as "another one" or "one of them." The court found for the plaintiffs, noting that "anti-discrimination laws and lawsuits have 'educated' would-be violators such that extreme manifestation of discrimination are

thankfully rare." But, the court continued, discriminatory conduct still persists. It is just that racial intent is now often masked.

6.9 What can I do to make sure my assessment is legally defensible?

Most lawsuits related to performance appraisals are based on the failure of a manager to:

- Follow the program's procedures consistently.
- Have sufficient documentation to support evaluations.
- Be objective in assessments by applying criteria consistently.

Tell Me More

Let's assume, for instance, that your organizational policy calls for quarterly reviews but you review one employee only once, at the end of the year. The individual gets a poor rating and no raise. Maybe you even put the person on warning. This person may have a case for contesting the appraisal because he, unlike his peers, didn't get the benefit of ongoing feedback and consequently had no way of knowing a problem in his performance ever existed, let alone the nature of the problem or degree of

disappointment you had in his work.

Companies have learned that they can trigger more lawsuits. But this shift in thinking puts a heavier burden on managers like you to provide an adequate paper trail to justify your assessments of your employees.

The third and final error—
inconsistent application of standards—can also win a court case for a disgruntled employee. Let's say an African American is late seventy-five days during the year and is ultimately terminated for chronic tardiness. The employee has a savvy lawyer and he investigates

and finds that you fired other employees, white and black, for the same reason. On the other hand, you didn't fire one white employee who was tardy more than seventy-five times. Indeed, he is still in your department. The lawyer might argue that the black employee might not have been terminated had he been white. And the plaintiff might win his case at considerable cost to your company.

Courts will also investigate your goals and standards to be sure they are realistic and based on the actual needs of the job. This is required under the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission's Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection. The Guidelines demand that standards be "valid," or job-related, and beyond that, that your firm's appraisal system measures job performance accurately.

These rules mean you must evaluate on objectives alone. You may have a very talented individual who fails to use her full potential. You may know that she is capable of doing much more than the standards set, even with the stretch you've added. It may be frustrating to see her let that potential go to waste, but so long as she is meeting the standards you've

set, she is doing her job.

Another red flag for courts is managers who can produce documentation only about poor performers or have only bad things to say about an employee. Critical incidents, good and bad, should be documented for all employees—poor, average, and outstanding.

Too much documentation can backfire, too. It provides more fertile ground a lawyer can plow to dig up an instance of discrimination. On the other hand, extensive documentation discourages frivolous lawsuits. Unless a lawyer sees potential for a

high damage award, he or she is unlikely to invest valuable time digging for evidence of unfair treatment of a client.

6.10 What should I document as part of performance management?

While documentation can protect you in a legal issue, supporting your assessment when questioned in court, it also ensures you conduct accurate and effective appraisal discussions with your employees. Consequently, you want to be sure you document helpful information. Which means, for instance, you shouldn't document hearsay ("Tim says Roger is starting to drink at lunch time"). Nor should you include

opinions, even your own ("I don't think Ed has what it takes to work here long term"). Your conclusion may be justified but isn't a valid record.

Good documentation enables a third party, reading the record, to come to the same conclusion you have. This is possible only when you provide a detailed description of specific incidents and facts.

Here are some other don'ts when documenting an employee's performance:

- Don't document rumors.

- Avoid personal comments about employees.
- Don't quote others' casual comments or opinions.
- Keep a record, too, of remarks—good and bad—from customers or clients or others outside the firm.

Tell Me More

Don't document rumors. You shouldn't use them to evaluate an employee, so they don't belong in your employee log.

Avoid personal comments about employees. So Elaine dresses like a gothic heroine, and her hair is stringy and makes her resemble pictures of Medusa. They have nothing to do with her job performance unless her job involves lots of client contacts and you work in a tradition-bound industry.

Don't quote others' casual comments or opinions. So Harry thinks Lucy is lazy. That shouldn't go into your notes. However, you can report that Harry Conover reported that Lucy refused to lend a hand to colleagues faced with tight deadlines. She completes her work

then sits and waits for her next assignment or walks about socializing rather than seeking out work.

The most important thing you should be documenting is your observations and facts—concrete successes, skills learned, problems solved or, the reverse, careless mistakes, knowledge and skill gaps, or problems caused. Include observations from other managers who have worked with the employee, describing specifically what happened according to the third party. If your employee works offsite, then you have to depend on

observations of other people.

Keep a record, too, of remarks—good and bad—from customers or clients or others outside the firm.

Don't forget, either, to note when one of your employee's performance impacts the output or jobs of others and how their behavior has done so—good or bad, again.

Purchase a notebook or create a template on your computer. Every week, take a few minutes to write critical incidents that have occurred involving your employees. You don't have to describe each and every thing that occurred. Instead, you

want to record "critical incidents"—those circumstances that reflect well or poorly on the employee's job performance over the previous week. Friday afternoons are often a good time—say, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., when the day is coming to a close—to update your records.

6.11 What is the "halo effect"?

The "halo effect" is a tendency in performance appraisals to assess an employee as outstanding because of one very impressive trait or accomplishment on the assumption that her other accomplishments were equally impressive. For instance, you were so impressed with the speed at which Patricia works that you ignore her rudeness to customers or failure to call back customers with the information they request.

Tell Me More

Sometimes, managers commit the "halo effect" because they are thinking of a recent incident, forgetting all those past incidents in which the same employee wasn't so superlative. Rather than consider the entire year's performance, these managers let one positive incident influence the twelve-month evaluation of the worker.

Managers may also be guilty of the "halo effect" when they have a rapport with an employee. The manager likes the individual, who is

very pleasant to the manager, so he or she gets a good evaluation despite a mediocre performance.

The absolute opposite of the "halo effect" is the "horn bias," also called the "pitchfork effect." In this instance, there's nothing that the employee can do to convince a manager that the employee is a good worker. Maybe the employee began the year poorly and then turned the performance around. But the manager fails to recognize the change, letting the earlier past mistakes blind him to the significant improvement in the employee's work.

A good employee who associates with mediocre or average employees may also never be rated above average due to those friendships. Despite differences in the level of their performances, the manager rates the employee the same as his or her buddies.

6.12 What are the most common errors managers make in performance appraisals?

The "halo effect" and "pitchfork effect" are rating biases, and one of seven common errors managers make in appraising employees. Here are the others:

- They set poor standards of performance.
- They don't set aside sufficient time for the appraisal process.

- They spend more time talking than listening to the employees they are appraising.
- They don't document employee performance or they keep records that aren't valid for fair and accurate appraisals.
- They rate everyone's work as satisfactory.
- They don't incorporate an employee development aspect to the appraisal interviews.

Tell Me More

- *They set poor standards of performance.* The manager writes the standard without clarifying with the employee what his expectations are. For instance, a manager may ask an employee to improve "quality" but not define it. What happens? The manager tells the employee, "You really haven't improved the quality of your work." The employee responds, in turn, "How can you say that? I shortened

the time it takes to process orders and I've increased the accuracy of data entry. What else did you expect of me?" Manager: "That's not what I meant by quality. I wanted you to...."

- *They don't set aside sufficient time for the appraisal process.* Not only do some managers rush through the paperwork, maybe even completing it minutes before they meet with employees, but they speed through meetings as well. They hand a completed

appraisal form to an employee and say, "Read this and sign it, please." That communicates to the employee that the manager sees the appraisal—and therefore performance management—as a mere formality. The consequence is that the employee sees no need to change his performance, regardless of what the document says. What's more, if the employee disagrees with the assessment, it may lead him to refuse to sign the

document, demand to see the supervisor's own manager about the appraisal, or even seek out a lawyer if the appraisal means no promotion or threatens job security.

- *They spend more time talking than listening to the employees they are appraising.* You may think you know all you need to know to do a fair assessment of your employees, but you can't be sure unless you give them the chance to share their

views about the jobs they are doing. If problems exist, the dialogue may also help you to get to their cause.

During an appraisal interview, a manager should speak no more than a fifth of the time. The employee should talk the remainder of the time.

- *They don't document employee performance or they keep records that aren't valid for fair and accurate appraisals. See answers to Questions 6.10 and 6.11.*

- *They rate everyone's work as satisfactory.* Why does this happen? Some managers don't have information to justify a rating of poor—or good, for that matter. Or, in the case of a poor assessment, they may consider a satisfactory rating the safest, least confrontational way of handling appraisals. But classifying everyone's work as satisfactory or better deprives good workers of the recognition they deserve and poor performers of the

information that might help them turn their performances around.

- *They don't incorporate an employee development aspect to the appraisal interviews.* Shortcomings in the current year can become the basis for discussion of development efforts with the employee for the next year. Failure to devote time to this only ensures a repetition of the same problems next year. Develop a program now to eliminate the weaknesses that this past

year identified.

6.13 Why do most appraisal programs call for formal reviews during the year?

Such meetings ensure that you discuss your employee's performance and review progress toward set objectives. These sessions—semiannually, quarterly, or every four months—enable you to identify problems and come up with action plans to get the employee back on course. The final assessment is done at the end of the year.

6.14 How should I best approach quarterly meetings?

You can approach these meetings as problem-solving sessions, in which you identify gaps in performance and discuss with the employee how these performance gaps can be addressed. Or you can use the appraisal form that your firm uses and go down the list of each goal or standard to discuss progress to date. Or you can begin on a positive note, pointing to accomplishments over the past few months, then go into more depth,

pointing to both strengths and weaknesses in performance during the quarter. If there have been some significant accomplishments by the employee during the past quarter, you should conclude by congratulating him on these. This is particularly so if performance has improved over previous review periods. On the other hand, if the session involved some change in goals or development of an action plan to address some performance weaknesses, you can wind up the quarterly session by assuring the employee that you think he or she is capable of accomplishing the new or

renewed goals set.

Tell Me More

Whatever the approach you take, be sure to give your employees time to prepare for these meetings, too.

They need to assess their actions in the past quarter and, perhaps, come with new objectives or suggestions of their own. When you set up the meeting—at least a week in advance—tell them to be ready to discuss their performance, as well as any other concerns.

At these meetings, provide time for

the employee to offer a self-assessment. Ask the individual what he or she would identify as strengths and what he or she would consider areas needing improvement. Then it's your turn—but remember that the meeting is not a monologue, so give the employee the opportunity to comment as you speak. With the agreed-upon objectives and performance factors in front of you both, cover problem areas or work your way down the list. After discussing each item, identify further steps that need to be taken to achieve the goal. Now is the time to bring up negative incidents related to

achieving the objectives. Don't hit on everything; focus on one or two at most. You don't want to dwell on past mistakes; rather, you want to look toward future job improvements.

If you have identified serious problems in the employee's performance, you should schedule another meeting immediately thereafter to address these problems. Otherwise, you will write your conclusions on the performance form, share the document with the employee, and ask the employee to sign the form as evidence that he agrees with your report and

conclusions reached.

Throughout this meeting, other quarterly sessions, and the end-of-year review, have your documentation handy. If an employee questions the review, be prepared to show documentation or notes you have maintained about the employee. Generally, well-reported incidents will convince the employee that your assessment is accurate. If the employee still disagrees, don't try to pressure him or her. Make clear that you are willing to change your review if the employee can convince you that you are wrong. Never be afraid to admit a mistake.

And let the employee know that you can change your opinion for the better before the year-end evaluation.

End the meeting with a constructive message. If problems were identified, wind up the session by saying, "I'll be here to help you if you need it."

6.15 When should I discuss money?

Salaries shouldn't be a part of the quarterly discussions. They shouldn't be discussed until the year-end appraisal and then only after you have completed the year-end evaluation. Keeping the topics separate ensures that the subject of money doesn't distract the employee from discussion of his or her performance.

Tell Me More

Your company may be one of those

that have managers hold off discussing dollars to make sure all the paperwork has been processed and senior management is in agreement with the final assessment. It can be awkward if the manager gives one rating to the employee, with the concomitant raise, and then management lowers the rating and subsequent salary increase.

6.16 How can I counsel a poorly performing employee?

The secret to good counseling is achieving the following objectives with the marginal performer during a one-on-one meeting:

- Get the employee to agree that there is a need for a change in quality of performance.
- Identify the nature of the problem in the employee's performance.

- Reach agreement on the specific actions that the employee will take to improve performance and set a timetable by which continued improved performance will be evident.
- Follow up regularly with the employee to ensure that she is reaching the goals you both have set.
- Recognize efforts at improvement. Failure to improve should be answered by termination.

Tell Me More

The communication process itself involves five steps:

Step 1: Describe the undesirable behavior. With documentation, you can point to specific incidents to show a discrepancy between the expected performance and the reality or impact of the employee's behavior on workflow.

Step 2: Listen to the response. You need to give the worker the opportunity to tell his side of the story or otherwise explain the

behavior.

Step 3: Identify the implications. The marginal performer has to know both the effect her behavior is having on workflow and the consequences of continuation of the behavior—at best, a lower performance rating; at worst, termination.

Step 4: Describe your expectations. What kind of behavior do you want the employee to exhibit?

Step 5: Get commitment for change. You want to be sure that the employee understands your expectation but, more important, that

he buys into the plan to achieve it. To get that cooperation, you need to encourage the employee's involvement in creating the action plan.

Listening isn't static. Rather, it is a back-and-forth flow of information and comments for the purpose of identifying the source of the problem—whether a motivational or an attitudinal issue or a training shortcoming, or a personal problem. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the employee to speak. Probe further with more open-ended questions but more pointed ones to gain greater detail. The intention is

to get the employee to not only explain the sub-par performance but identify how to prevent a recurrence.

So the communication process goes on. But before all this can take place, the employee must agree that yes, indeed, a problem in performance exists and that he is responsible. A secret in gaining employee agreement lies in demonstrating a willingness to hear the employee's explanation. To prompt a response, you might say, "Tell me about it," "Is my understanding correct?" or "Is there more I need to know about what happened?"

If the employee is stalling to accept responsibility, offering to look further into the matter may be enough to get the employee to say something like, "Gee, I guess I could have handled the situation better," or "I might be responsible for what happened. What would you have wanted me to do?"

Getting cooperation is important to the success of the counseling session, but even more important is clarifying the cause of the problem.

Many different situations lie behind problem performance. The cause might be due to stress within or

outside the workplace, unclear priorities (more attributable to you than the employee), or poor time or task management on the employee's part. Personal problems also create work-related problems, distracting employees from the work and making them unproductive and maybe uncooperative and argumentative. Once you have identified the cause, you are better able to develop an action plan to turn the performance around.

Thereafter, monitor progress. Failure to meet the goals set demands action on your part. Given today's lean organizations, termination may

be the logical decision.

6.17 If the performance problem is due to a personal problem, how do I start talking about someone's personal life without appearing to be nosy or invading privacy?

If you and the employee have developed a good personal relationship, you won't be considered nosy. You have always shown interest in the employee as a person. All you have to do is to carry

this further by commenting about the employee's obvious change in performance.

If you don't have this kind of positive long-term relationship, talk about the job issue. "This assignment should not have caused you any problems. Could there be something complicating the situation?" Out of this discussion, a personal problem may emerge. "The assignment should be simple, but I just have been feeling depressed lately and can't focus." Or, "No one seems to have difficulty getting into the office at 9 a.m. Do you have any reason for why you can't make it into the

office on time or have been leaving early lately?" The employee responds, "My wife and I have been having marital problems. She has moved out, leaving my son with me. I have to get him ready for school and I leave early to pick him up at the end of his school day."

Once you have identified that the performance problem is caused by a personal problem, you need to work with the employee to identify a workable solution. It doesn't matter whether a performance problem is due to a lack of training or attitudinal issue or a personal matter, employees need to meet or exceed

the standards for their job.

It may be tempting to play "Dear Abby" and tell an employee how to cope with his below-par feelings or marital issue, as in the previously mentioned cases, but that can be dangerous. Giving advice beyond your expertise is too serious a matter for any manager, especially advice off the top of your head. Your role as a manager is to encourage the employee to think through his problem so he can make a decision. If common-sense solutions aren't enough, you may want to suggest that the employee seek some professional assistance. For

instance, in the cases above, a visit to the doctor may be the first step to find out why the first employee feels depressed. And there may be a family counseling service that can offer advice both with the marital problem and childcare.

As the employee seeks outside help, it is important that you keep his or her confidence. Certainly other members of the work team shouldn't be told without the employee's consent.

Problems should be taken seriously. They are very serious to the one living them. Empathy and

understanding are owed every human being. So don't jump on the employee if he or she takes some sick leave to get through particularly hard days. Having a caring manager will keep alienation from occurring and foster better feelings about the company.

You may even want to make some work reassignments during this period. It may be worthwhile to give employees involved in outside counseling structured, nondecision-making tasks. When that isn't possible, you should undertake joint decision making for a period. Frequent follow-up and

encouragement, not checking up, will help a troubled employee concentrate and be productive. This will require more attention from you but your employee won't resent it if it is offered in a helpful, "let's get this done" way.

6.18 If I bring up a problem, what do I do or say if the employee becomes emotional?

If employees cry in response to your criticism, offer some compassion, along with tissues and time to compose themselves. Suggest a second meeting later in the day. Demonstrate your concern but don't let the emotional outburst distract you from the purpose of the meeting, which is to get the employee's performance back on track.

If the employee grows angry and starts to shout, don't reciprocate, even if you are the target of overflowing anger. Stay calm while the employee blows off steam. Until she has had a chance to vent, she won't be ready to talk about the situation with you.

Tell Me More

Once the employee has regained control, propose that you both develop a short-term action plan that could reverse the situation. If she still seems unable to control her temper, offer to continue the

discussion later.

Sometimes, an employee will become so angry that he or she threatens you or promises violent acts against the company. If you feel threatened, call the Security Department. If you work for a small company, call in a coworker.

Even if the situation doesn't develop to the point that you feel in danger, report the threats to either the Human Resources Department or your immediate manager. If you have to fire the employee, have a third person in the room, maybe even a security person nearby,

should he or she try to carry out his threats.

Today, unfortunately, the number of violent acts within companies by disgruntled employees is growing. You dare not take a threat lightly.

Some employees react in just the opposite manner: They will listen to your criticism and then silently leave your office, unwilling to discuss the issue further. While you may prefer to let the clam hide in his or her shell, refusing to speak further about the problem, you must talk out the problem with the person. You haven't met your managerial responsibility

until you and the employee have identified the source of the problem, possible solutions, and agreed on short-term goals that the employee must meet by a certain date.

6.19 How do I coach an employee?

The term coach is associated with on-the-job training, but the role of coach involves more than training, albeit that is part of the responsibility. Besides training, as coach, you are responsible for:

- Acting as a role model.
- Hiring the best employees.
- Creating a work culture in which employees have reason to be motivated.

- Clarifying expectations—both micro-expectations associated with particular jobs and macro-objectives tied to the organization's overall strategy and mission.
- Providing feedback on your employees' behavior that will put them on the right performance track before counseling is needed.
- Providing the training and resources employees need to improve their performance.

- Praising, praising, and praising some more to reinforce positive performance.

Tell Me More

As a coach, you will meet with employees, as you do in your counseling role, but your intent is to provide feedback to help your employee raise the level of his or her performance. Your goal is to make that average or good worker into an outstanding worker by looking, with him or her, at mistakes as learning opportunities.

6.20 Is there any best way to conduct the year-end performance appraisal interview?

The year-end appraisal meeting is similar to the other quarterly meetings in that you discuss performance and chart progress toward achieving objectives. But the conclusions at this meeting will determine the employee's rating for the year, as well as salary increase, bonus, or other financial reward. So it will demand more preparation to prepare you for any objections to your conclusions. There will also be

forms to complete.

Both of these responsibilities are made simpler with your documentation in hand. Using the documentation, compare the employee's performance to the standards or goals set. Use the language of the goals to show a clear relationship between the work done, goals, and ratings given.

Tell Me More

Before your meeting with the employee, review the appraisal form and documentation. Since you and

your employees have been meeting throughout the year to discuss performance, they shouldn't be surprised about the conclusions you reached, right? Not so. An employee may suddenly become aware of the impact on salary of the rating given, or realize that the assessment will become a part of his permanent record and become upset, even refuse to sign the document. Stars whose ratings aren't as high as expected may even balk.

Faced with disagreement over ratings, you should not compromise to avoid litigation. However, hear the employee out. There may be cause

to reassess the performance. If you do decide to revise what you wrote, edit in the employee's presence to assure him that you have revised the appraisal. If you still feel strongly that your assessment is correct as is, then say so and provide evidence for your case.

That's usually enough to quiet most employees. If you have regularly met with your employees and provided ongoing feedback, maintained documentation about performance, and used that documentation to prepare logical arguments for your assessments, most staff members will acknowledge the fairness of your

assessment by signing the form.

6.21 What do I do when an employee disagrees with something I have written on the performance appraisal? If I accept their argument, can I upgrade their assessment?

If an employee disagrees with your assessment—even refuses to sign the appraisal form—don't become upset. Explain that the signature does not represent agreement with the evaluation. It only signifies that

the employee has seen the appraisal, discussed it, and been given a copy.

If the employee wishes to refute your assessment, suggest he write a memo so it can be attached to the appraisal when you submit it to the Human Resources Department. This may not be enough for some employees. They may demand to go over your head, to your manager, to refute your evaluation. In that event, tell them to feel free to do so. If you have fulfilled your performance management responsibilities, you have no reason to be worried. Prepare a written record of your

year-end appraisal meeting with the employee, attach it to the appraisal form, and submit it to Human Resources.

Tell Me More

One of two things will happen when an employee disagrees with your assessment. Either he will be able to persuade your manager or the Human Resources Department to change the assessment or he will be notified that a meeting with him is needed to discuss the issue.

If a meeting is held, you will be

present. Don't be defensive. In many instances, such meetings are held simply to give the employee an opportunity to put his case before another person within the organization. If you have sufficient documentation for your assessment, you should be able to justify your assessment. If such meetings say anything, it is that you need to perfect your ability to put in writing your assessments. Evaluations should be so written that a third person—either your manager or someone from the Human Resources Department—is clear about the standard set, the level of

performance, and the assessment based on that work.

If your assessment is rejected and the employee gets a higher rating than you gave, don't let that prompt you in the future from going easier on employees—or, in retaliation, tougher.

6.22 How can I use the evaluation to set employee development plans for the next year?

At the same time that you share your year-end written appraisal of an employee, lay the groundwork for the next year's performance by working out an employee-development plan.

Too often managers talk only about the financial consequences of the employee's performance and just pay lip service to the developmental side of the appraisal process. But

the year-end meeting is an excellent time to discuss skill weaknesses evident in the employee's previous year's performance and create action plans to strengthen these areas.

Employee development is for outstanding performers, too. If an employee has consistently exceeded expectations and done so for several years, she is probably frustrated with the lack of opportunities for promotion or new challenges. This is the time, then, to discuss training programs she can use to develop skills that could increase employability.

Tell Me More

This meeting shouldn't be the only time during the year that you address these issues. At every quarterly review, be ready to work out development programs with employees to minimize any shortcomings responsible for their falling behind in the goals set.

At the development meeting, however, most of the time should be spent, in your role as coach, discussing how the worker can improve performance or develop skills that will enable him to advance

to a position of greater responsibility.

If opportunities for promotion don't exist within your organization, or are of little interest to the employee, then you may want to discuss new assignments that would challenge the employee. Or if the employee is not interested in new responsibilities, discuss ways he or she can operate more independently.

For outstanding employees, your mutual goal is to answer the question, "What can we do to help you accomplish more?" For other employees, the goal is another question: "How can we make it

easier for you to meet and exceed
this year's goals?"

Chapter 7: Discipline and Termination

7.1 What is progressive discipline?

Progressive discipline is a system designed to encourage employees to work according to certain rules of good behavior and good conduct. When these rules are broken, specific actions are taken—from verbal warnings to suspensions, to reprimands, and finally to termination. Which action to take depends on the following:

- The type of offense.
- The effect that the offense has on the business,

including co-workers

- The employee's response to calling him on the behavior—along with the possibility that the behavior will be repeated
- The disciplinary action that has been taken against other employees for similar offenses

Tell Me More

For instance, a verbal or written reprimand would come from a first offense of the following:

- Knowingly filling out a time sheet of another employee
- Being habitually tardy without explanation or habitually leaving early
- Chronic absenteeism
- Disorderly conduct on corporate property
- Immoral conduct or indecency on company property
- Malicious gossip and/or the spreading of rumors

A second offense of any of the above could lead to suspension or termination.

Behaviors that call for immediate discharge include:

- Possession or consumption of non-prescribed narcotics on company property
- Intoxication at work
- Instigation of a fight on company property
- Theft
- Intentional harassment,

including sexual harassment

- Destruction of property
- Insubordination
- Misrepresentation of important facts in seeking employment
- Violation of confidentiality or sharing of trade secrets outside the business
- Extended unexcused absences
- Gambling on corporate premises

7.2 How do I conduct progressive discipline?

Like your performance appraisal system, unless your employees see the disciplinary system as fair and equitable, it will cause you more problems than it can cure. Most important, your practice of progressive discipline must keep in mind your employee's dignity, legal rights, and the union agreement where one exists. The system itself should contain rules that:

- Are work-related.
- Require adequate notice of

the rules and expectations as well as the consequences of violating the rules.

- Mandate timely and fair investigation of incidents or charges.
- Demand substantial evidence that an employee is guilty of an offense.
- Insist upon equal treatment (characterized by evenhanded application of rules).
- Specify penalties in

proportion to the offense
and the work record.

Tell Me More

Many managers place an emphasis on the detection of wrongdoing and the leveling of punishment once an employee is caught. It needn't be this way. It communicates a lack of trust in employees and a demand for blind obedience and, interestingly enough, it actually encourages willful disobedience of rules and regulations on the part of employees. Employees play a game with their managers when they work

in such an environment, becoming covert and sneaky in their behavior. They deliberately plot to break rules to see if they can beat the system and get away with it. That's not the kind of work environment you want to inspire.

Rather, you want to promote positive discipline. Toward that end, explain the reasons for the rules. Look upon disciplinary action as corrective in the initial stages. It should become punitive only when counseling fails to change behavior. By your words and actions, indicate to your staff that you don't want to trap anyone. Communicate the limits imposed on

your employees and explain that you want to promote reasonable behavior and prevent any unacceptable conduct. You want to promote willing compliance with and obedience to your company's rules.

Make sure you:

- Know each employee, his or her record, and the nature and cause of the offense.
- Are clear about your powers as laid down in your job description.
- Check on precedents—that

is, similar situations in the past and disciplinary action taken—before you discipline.

- Consider the circumstances surrounding the misconduct.
- Determine whether it was willful or accidental.
- Determine whether the employee was aware of the limits placed on his or her conduct.
- Get the facts.
- Coordinate your actions with other managers.

Every manager should enforce every policy, rule, standard, and procedure with equal weight and effort. It is better not to have a rule than have a rule that is unenforced or unenforceable.

7.3 How do I conduct an internal investigation?

If you weren't present and can't speak from personal observation, you will need to speak to those who were present. This is particularly true if the defendant denies the offense. Meet with witnesses as soon after the incident as possible. The questions asked should be open-ended and phrased to show no bias to influence answers.

Keep notes of witnesses' comments. These will be part of any documentation you compile when

you next meet with the employee. During this investigative stage, you may want to put the employee on suspension to minimize the tension as you look into the situation.

Tell Me More

If you will be interviewing several individuals who were present or are familiar with the situation, ask each the same questions. Compare notes. If you are dealing with members of your own department, you should be familiar enough with their relationship with the employee to identify any lies told you to protect or hurt the

employee.

Once you are familiar with the incident as told by your staff and others, visit with other managers to discuss the incident to determine how they might have handled similar situations. Go to the Human Resources Department as well. Depending on the nature of the incident, you may even want a representative from the Human Resources Department with you as you investigate the situation.

Once you have insights into the who, what, where, when, and how, you are better able to meet with the

employee and discuss the situation further.

7.4 Can I be sued for *not* firing some employees?

This problem arises when a manager becomes aware that one of her employees may cause harm to others yet fails to take any action to prevent the employee from in fact causing harm.

If the employee should subsequently injure another employee, a customer, or another person, the injured party may sue the employer for being negligent in retaining the dangerous employee (called "negligent retention"). The situation

first arises during the hiring process —when candidates' past history has to be well screened for evidence of violent or erratic behavior. But problems can occur, as well, after an employee is on board. Personal problems can find an outlet through aggressive or abusive behavior or drug or alcohol use. Sometimes advancement in a company can transfer someone without critical qualifications or with a history of problems into a position where he might be dangerous to others.

Tell Me More

To limit your risk of being sued for negligently retaining a dangerous worker, watch for any signs that an employee is unstable or unfit to remain in his position. Candidates for promotion to positions that place them in very different venues should undergo a reference check where any questions exist.

Of course, investigate thoroughly any complaints of employee misconduct. In some cases, you may be able to effectively deal with a problem through training or by changing the employee's responsibilities. In others, however, your safest recourse may be to fire

the employee.

7.5 How do I counsel employees for misconduct or rule violations?

Most organizations have two counseling tracks: One is for performance problems (see [Chapter 6](#)); the other is for rule violations and other misconduct.

Counseling for rule violations or other misconduct begins immediately with a verbal or written warning, depending on the nature of the infraction. Sometimes an employee is suspended without pay for a

period of time to rethink his behavior. A repetition of the rule violation thereafter is followed immediately by termination. Where the misbehavior is very serious, there may be no effort in counseling—the employee may be fired immediately.

Termination may actually be the first step and not the last step in disciplining a rule violator—for instance, in the case of violation of safety rules or theft.

The counseling process may consist of four or five steps:

Step 1. Issue a verbal warning.

Step 2. Issue a written warning.

Step 3. Reprimand the employee.

Step 4. Suspend the employee.

Step 5. Terminate the employee.

Tell Me More

Disciplinary counseling is dependent on the nature of the misconduct.

Depending on the rule violation, the employee's past work history, and

attitude immediately after the event, the counseling process can unfold in four or five steps:

Step 1. Issue a verbal warning. The verbal warning is usually used when the misconduct is minor or it is the employee's first offense. It lets the employee know that you are aware of what he has done and that you expect him not to repeat the offense. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism may be included in the category of a minor offense or it may be treated as a performance issue, depending upon the corporate policy.

Step 2. Issue a written warning. If

the verbal warning isn't heeded or the offense demands more than a verbal warning, then you might want to issue a written warning in memo form. A copy is given to the employee and one is placed in his or her personnel file.

Step 3. Reprimand the employee. Often, this action will be taken by the Human Resources Department. The message here should be clear to the employee: Another repeat of the incident, and the employee will be suspended or terminated, depending on the nature of the offense.

Step 4. Suspend the employee. This action is taken in the event of repeated misconduct or a serious offense. Sometimes the employee is paid while he is away from work, sometimes he is not—the nature of the situation often determines that. The employee is expected to use the time away from work to do some soul searching about his desire to stay with the firm and, as an integral part of that, his future conduct.

Step 5. Terminate the employee. If the problem still continues, then the employee is terminated.

7.6. What if bad job performance is due to a physical problem?

If you have a reasonable belief that the employee is not able to do the job because of a physical problem, then you have the right to ask a disability-related question of the employee or require a medical examination. Let's say that Barry has worked for you for seven years without either a tardiness or an attendance problem, but suddenly he starts coming to work late, develops bags under his eyes, and falls asleep at his desk. Not only can you

ask the employee about his well-being or if he is feeling all right, but you can ask him if he can continue to perform his work with reasonable accommodation. If he can't, then you can terminate him.

7.7 Can an employee assistance program (EAP) solve performance and discipline problems?

An employee assistance program is a company-sponsored program instituted to help employees deal with personal problems that are interfering with their productivity. Such problems include alcoholism, marital difficulties, depression, and other psychological concerns. The counselors are not company employees but independent contractors—usually specialists who provide this service to several

organizations.

Managers should be trained to recognize when the kind of specialized counseling from EAP may be needed and to suggest that their employees take advantage of the training. In some instances, the company may require that the employee assistance program be used as part of a disciplinary action. For instance, an alcoholic may be given the choice of using the corporate EAP to overcome her problem or being terminated.

EAP has been proven to salvage many skilled and experienced

people. But it doesn't always work. If you find that the individual's performance continues to be below standard despite lengthy EAP help, you may have to terminate the individual. A final warning should be given in a meeting with the employee that a further discipline incident or other problem in performance will result in his termination.

Tell Me More

Most EAP programs include the following specialists:

Medical doctors. Physicians may

deal with general medical problems or specific disorders.

Psychiatrists. These physicians specialize in serious psychological and emotional disorders.

Psychologists or psychotherapists. These individuals work with people who have less serious emotional problems.

Marital counselors or family therapists. These specialists deal with marital problems and difficulties with children or other family members.

Financial counselors. Since many of the worries people have are about money, financial counselors can help them work out payment plans with creditors, develop budgets, and live within their incomes.

Whether the employee agrees to accept the EAP referral or not, you should make clear that work performance *must* improve. Set specific objectives and specific time periods for performance improvement. In the end, the employee should leave the meeting with you with three clear messages: (1) You are concerned and eager to help; (2) you have identified

problems with her work; and (3) work performance must improve or termination may be warranted.

7.8 What alternatives do I have to termination?

If you think the worker is worth saving, you may want to place the person on probation, place him on suspension, or demote him. If a newcomer has failed to meet your expectations or a long-term employee is not able to handle the needs of a changing job, you may want to ask the employee to leave voluntarily.

Tell Me More

If the employee has the potential to

turn around, then you may want to put her on probation—during which she is denied certain benefits. For instance, she may not have the right to work flexible hours or attend company-sponsored events until her work performance improves. A typical probation period lasts from one to three months. During this time, the worker's performance is monitored strictly to make sure that there is no repetition of the problem.

The employee is told that this is her chance to save her job and that she will be evaluated at the end of the probation period. An employee who violates the terms of the probation

and is subsequently fired will be hard-pressed to prove to a judge or jury that she was treated unfairly.

Probation is often used when an employee has shown some aberrant behavior, such as drug or alcohol abuse. The employee agrees to seek help, and an agreement is formulated in which the employer agrees to keep the worker on as an employee and the employee agrees to reform her behavior.

When an employee is suspended from work, with or without pay, he is expected to formulate a revised work plan or set specific new goals.

It also gives a company the chance to investigate further charges against an employee. A worker who fails to come up with a reasonable plan to improve or correct his improper behavior will be fired at once. Termination will also result if the investigation identifies him as guilty of a major violation of company rules.

Suspension is a fairly drastic measure, one step short of termination for misconduct, and it can be tricky. Some employees enjoy the paid vacation it sometimes offers. Those suspended without pay return to work broke and angry.

And their coworkers aren't that thrilled, either—they had to pick up the slack during the employee's suspension.

Demotion may salvage an employee who has failed to do the job but has the right job attitude and interest to want to keep on staff. Maybe the employee was promoted beyond his ability or maybe he needs an opportunity to grow further before he is promoted. Whatever the reason, putting him in a position with fewer responsibilities and less pay may actually be a relief. This transfer may work out for both the employee and the company but it's important

that you make clear how and why the performance in the original position was deficient if you choose this as an option.

Yes, you can ask an employee to leave voluntarily, assuming that the worker and job are incompatible (there is no overt wrongdoing or negligence involved), and you want to address the situation quickly. For the employee to quit voluntarily, you usually have to give him reason to leave—like a reasonable, even generous, severance. The employee saves face, and you are spared the time you would have had to spend in counseling an employee whom you

believe would not fit in anyway.

Sometimes, companies agree to keep such employees on staff until they land a new job, but this may be tricky in a tight labor market. A clean, quick break is much better.

7.9 What is termination for cause?

Termination for cause is immediate termination prompted by breaking the code of acceptable workplace behavior—like possession of an unapproved weapon at work or a hand in the till or endangering the health and safety of coworkers.

Tell Me More

Employment at will theoretically gives you freedom to fire workers whenever you wish. But unless you have a good reason for termination,

you may be vulnerable to a lawsuit claiming the firing was unfair. Such legal cases usually charge that the termination was due to racial or age or other bias. Unless this charge can be proved, there is no case.

7.10 What is the best way to conduct a termination meeting?

A termination meeting should last no more than ten to fifteen minutes and have the sole purpose of conveying the decision to terminate the employee. For the meeting, you should:

- Prepare what you will say ahead of time.
- Give an adequate reason for the discharge.
- Allow the employee to have

his say.

- Make it clear that the decision is final.
- Briefly run through the benefits.
- Suggest that the individual go to the Human Resources Department with further questions.

Tell Me More

Given today's electronic workplace, there are employees who have been fired by telephone and e-mail, which

shows tremendous lack of respect for the employee. Termination should be done in a face-to-face meeting with the employee. For the meeting itself, choose a neutral setting like a conference room where coworkers won't overhear the conversation. Your office may be too visible. Also, once you have spoken to the employee, he may become so emotional that you may have no way to free yourself from the employee's presence without literally asking her to leave. Which can only add to the emotion at the time.

Once you are seated together, be direct and focused. While you should

communicate in body language that you know that being fired has a profound impact on one's life, gird yourself to be the bearer of the bad news. While no one wants to stay to hear any emotional outbursts that follow, unless you are fearful about the person's reaction, listen to the employee. Allow her to vent for a while. Beware of a diatribe that carries on overly long. A firing meeting that lasts more than twenty minutes becomes increasingly unproductive.

If the employee seems to need more time with you, you might offer, "This news is a lot to digest right now."

Suggest that you meet later—even a few days from then to discuss the particulars of what went wrong. At that time, you may want to have a third party present. Or you might recommend that the employee write down her thoughts in a letter or memo. Either signals to the employee your willingness to listen to and take seriously her feelings. At the same time, it is important that you make clear that the decision won't be changed.

Further, as tempted as you may be to put the blame on some corporate plan like a desire to reorganize or downsize, don't use this reason

unless it is absolutely true. Even though it may seem less judgmental or less accusatory, it may have costly consequences if the fired employee chooses to take the decision to court, claiming it was a discriminatory decision. Then you could easily find yourself unable to document your bogus claim that the organization was restructuring.

When you are finished, suggest that the employee go to the Human Resources Department to find out more about the benefits available to her. After that, you might suggest that the employee may want to take the day off. In most cases, you want

to make the day that you deliver the news the employee's last day on the job. This is easier said than done. Many employees will want to come to their workspace or cubicle and pack their personal belongings. You might want to suggest they come back after the workday or over the weekend to remove their personal effects. At that time, you may want someone on staff present to be sure that only personal items are removed, not company property.

7.11 What do I do if an employee becomes very emotional, or even threatening, when I terminate her?

The responses run the gamut from tears to shouts to threats of violence. If you have reason to believe that an employee might become emotional or even violent, you may want to arrange to have a mental health professional—perhaps a member of your company's Employee Assistance Program—or a security person present,

depending on the reaction you suspect. This person should be nearby but not in the room with you when you communicate the news to the employee. In most cases, it would prove counterproductive to have these individuals present during the termination interview. Their presence may further anger or disrupt a potentially volatile employee.

Tell Me More

Increasingly, I hear about companies that escort terminated employees immediately out, whatever the cause

of termination—from lay-off to poor performance to a rule infraction. When it isn't called for, don't do it. Not only is this not always necessary, but it is likely to embarrass the fired worker and to unsettle coworkers who may be demoralized by the bum's rush being given a former colleague. Further, such behavior may so anger the terminated employee that she may institute a charge against the company, with or without cause, due to your firm's final treatment of her. She may not win but the cost in wasted time may be significant.

7.12 Do I need to document the termination meeting?

Yes. Documentation of the termination meeting is important, regardless of the reason for termination. Actually, documentation of termination due to a serious rule infraction may be more important than documentation of a termination meeting due to continued poor performance. Assuming that the incident is serious, necessitating immediate termination, you will want to write up the incident, information obtained in investigating the situation

if you were not present when the misbehavior occurred or was discovered, and the reasons for choosing to terminate the employee rather than take other action, like suspension.

You can never be sure, regardless of the rule infraction. Even the worst-behaved employee may later file a lawsuit or a claim with an investigative agency such as the EEOC, claiming the decision was prompted by bias.

7.13 Why is termination sometimes a good thing for the employee being fired?

Terminating an employee may be unpleasant, but it may be the best thing you can do for an employee who is not pulling her weight on the job. The reality is that she won't go any further than she has, given the poor quality of her performance. Further, her coworkers aren't likely to be supportive in today's lean workplace—after all, if you aren't making up for her shortcomings, they will be doing so. And, most

important, in another company and in another job, this poor performer may fit right in and be a terrific performer. By terminating her, you will be giving her that chance to excel elsewhere.

7.14 What if I don't feel right about terminating an employee?

Some managers agonize about the big "T." But if you have set objectives and the employee has done little to achieve those objectives or made only halfhearted efforts toward reaching them, then you need not feel guilty about having to use the three-word phrase, "You are fired."

Tell Me More

If you have fears about how well

your claim will stand up in court, you may want to meet with the Human Resources Department and share your documentation with them. Ask them if they think that your case would stand up in court if the disgruntled employee brought it there.

There are also some questions that you may want to ask yourself. A "yes" to any of these questions could make them legally questionable:

Is there a written employment agreement? If so, make sure the firing conforms to any termination language there.

Were there promises made about the job and its longevity that could be construed as an agreement—or language in an employee handbook that reasonably might be interpreted as such a promise?

Could the firing be considered discrimination based on race, skin color, age, gender, religious beliefs, national origin, disability, or pregnancy? Whenever there is the possibility that a worker might raise a discrimination claim, you must be sure there is a valid business reason for a firing decision.

Could the firing be considered a

retaliatory act because the worker reported some illegal activity, such as sexual harassment on the job? Under such circumstances, you may need adequate outside substantiation.

Have you required or encouraged the employee to violate the law or public policy on the job? Whistle blowing has received high visibility recently, and may be used as an argument by a terminated employee in a court case if circumstances allow it.

7.15 What do I say to the rest of my work group about termination of an employee in the group?

Those who remain will notice the empty cubicle—don't think you can get away with saying nothing. Rather than getting them to forget the event more quickly, failure to explain will fuel gossip at the printer or increase fear that another ax might fall—and they might be the victim. The same thing is likely to happen if you tell them, "I can't talk about it." Or, even worse: "Our lawyers have told me not to say anything about the

matter." Even if the corporate lawyer was involved and warned you against excessive remarks, encourage him to work with you in formulating a statement that will somehow explain that the fired worker is no longer an employee.

Tell Me More

Be forthright but sparse in your explanation. For instance, you might say simply, "Michael was fired this morning after a month of counseling did not help him improve his job performance." Or, "Despite repeated warnings and attempts to schedule

her work hours so she could meet family commitments, Sharon was fired because of chronic lateness."

Honesty may be the most prudent policy, but even if they are true, damaging comments about a former employee could interfere with her chances for a new job. This might make you seem callous to the remaining workers. And if your words are vile enough, they could even trigger a defamation lawsuit on the part of the terminated worker.

Since there are numerous opportunities in the typical firing process for an employer to sully an

employee's reputation, it is increasingly common for former employees to bring a defamation charge when they are fired. A defamation charge isn't a challenge to the employee's dismissal. Rather, it is a way of seeking revenge against a manager who was sloppy, insensitive, or downright mean during the firing process or in giving out references to prospective employers.

Defamation is difficult to prove. The former employee must show that you significantly damaged her good name, reducing her chances for being rehired by another company.

This may entail lots of hair-splitting over the facts but the truth is, the case usually depends on whether or not distribution of damaging information was intentional and malicious—in other words, you meant to hurt your former employee.

To sue for defamation, a former employee must show that you made a false or damaging statement, told or wrote that statement to at least one other employee, were negligent or intentional in communicating the statement, and/or harmed the worker in some way by communicating the statement, such as by causing him or her to lose a

position elsewhere. Some unflattering comments don't usually qualify as defamation. What does? You risk defamation when you falsely claim that the employee committed a crime, was incompetent in his work, used drugs or alcohol on the job, or otherwise acted in some way that made him unfit for the job.

7.16 If I have to lay people off to save money, how do I choose which ones to let go when none are problem performers?

In truth, termination for cost-cutting reasons should have nothing to do with job performance, although many managers use it as an excuse to rid themselves of poor performers—particularly when they haven't the level of documentation to terminate the worker due to sub-par performance.

If you must let people go, and you have no other alternative, then pay attention to the personal facts and figures of those you choose to keep. Ideally, the makeup of your department after the fact should be similar to that before the fact in terms of race, age, gender, and ethnicity. If this isn't the case, then you may be liable for a discrimination charge. If your cuts might look discriminatory to a jury, make other cuts instead.

For instance, cutting some of the highest-paid staff members may save you more money than downsizing your younger, newer

employees but it could result in an age discrimination charge if those you cut are all 40 years old or more. Projections suggest we can see a major increase in these, given the number of boomers. If you use education as a factor, downsizing those with fewer college degrees may leave your department disproportionately low in minorities. Downsizing that is too heavily weighted in women, likewise, may look suspicious to a jury.

Chapter 8: **Teambuilding**

8.1 Why should I build a sense of teamwork among my staff members?

When you have built a team, you have put together a group of people who are highly committed and consider themselves mutually accountable to achieve results. They each have clearly defined roles. They have measurable goals and a visible purpose around which to unite. And they have a leader—you. This is true teamwork.

When people work together in an atmosphere of trust and accountability toward a common goal, they put aside turf issues and politics and focus on the tasks to be done. This focus of resources overcomes barriers, helps to identify new opportunities, and builds a momentum that leads to three major bottom-line benefits:

1. Better problem solving
2. Greater productivity
3. More effective use of resources

Jon Katzenbach, author of *The*

Wisdom of Teams, observes, "There is virtually no environment in which teams—if done right— can't have a measurable impact on the performance of an organization."

Tell Me More

The term "team" is often used to refer to groups that meet over time to complete a project and then wind down (e.g., cross-functional teams). It is also used to describe a group that operates solely as a team, with the role of leader alternating (self-directed work teams), or a traditional staff that meets as a

group on an ongoing basis to discuss operating issues. In this chapter, when the word team is used, it is a synonym for "teamwork."

Many departments do not operate as teams, or "practice teamwork." Members may talk to each other at the printer or over lunch, and their work efforts may be designed to meet the overarching objectives of the department, but these employees work on a day-to-day basis largely as individuals. This is unfortunate, for many business experts now believe that teamwork is critical to an organization's

productivity and profitability.

Downsizing, right-sizing, reorganizing, reengineering—all are indications of the pressure on organizations to reduce the size of their workforces. The only way to cope with this need to do more with less is by working cooperatively in an environment of respect, drawing on all the resources available to get the job done.

There is also a group of softer benefits of teamwork that greatly enhances the workplace:

1. People enjoy working together and teamwork

satisfies a need for socialization.

2. Working together helps people grow as they learn from each other and develop important skills.
3. Working together toward a common goal provides a sense of purpose that is motivating and fulfilling.

Need I say more about the benefits of teamwork?

8.2 What do successful work teams have in common?

Productive teams usually share many characteristics. They have a common purpose each member is committed to. They stay involved until the objective is completed. They care about each other. And, in keeping with this, they are concerned about how their actions and attitudes affect each other. They listen to each other and respect all points of view, and are sensitive to each other's needs. And their leaders encourage everyone's

participation in the decisions to be made.

Tell Me More

If you looked into groups of employees who work as teams, you would see these characteristics or traits:

Openness and candor. The more reluctant people are to express their feelings and be honest with each other, the more likely suspicion and distrust will exist. When real teamwork is present, team members, because they basically

trust each other, are more open and honest with each other.

Acceptance of assignments. It might make each of us happier if we could choose all our work. However, this is unrealistic. Still, when real teamwork exists, team members willingly accept assignments. Motivated by peer pressure, they also work hard to get their jobs done right the first time and to meet deadlines.

Understood and accepted goals. A team needs purpose, direction, and goals. These objectives are accepted by the members of the team, and the team members work

collaboratively to achieve them. Their manager has explained the importance of achievement of these goals in the bigger corporate picture, and team members understand why it is so important for the goals to be reached. Committed to their accomplishment, they assist one another to make them a reality.

Progress and results assessed.

Teamwork requires that members be results-directed as opposed to process-oriented. Their focus is on their objectives, and their activities are directed toward those goals. Periodically, under direction of a leader, the team assesses its

progress. That knowledge serves to guide future team action. This includes identification of barriers and what can be done to rid the team of them.

Shared trust. In a healthy team, members essentially trust one another. Despite occasional conflict, members get along well and enjoy each other's company. They cooperate and get the work done.

Involvement and participation. Teamwork requires that members be involved in their work and participate in team activities. What they say and do counts for something.

Many work environments in which teamwork is practiced involve team members in decision making, practicing participative management.

8.3 How do I handle a talented loner or non-team player on my team?

You must either create a niche that this non-mainstreamer can fill successfully and productively or encourage the individual to modify his or her behavior for the sake of the other members of the team.

To change the individual's non-team behavior, you might play up peer pressure. Although loners may march to the sound of a different drummer, explain that the behavior can cause ill will and negative

feelings from other team members. A change would move this person closer to the center of the group, reduce coworkers' resentment, and help to eliminate the uncomfortable us-versus-him attitude that may exist now.

Tell Me More

You may also point out the reality of the situation. While praising the individual's experience, special skills, and length of service, emphasize that everyone is expected to embrace a one-for-all, all-for-one attitude. Anything less threatens the

success of the entire work unit and will jeopardize the headstrong employee's job security in a corporate culture that revolves around teamwork.

Alternatively, you can assign your lone rider to work that will further the team's goals without him having to interact closely with other members. For instance, the individual could research problems, locate resources, or evaluate certain projects in advance and recommend actions that the team may take.

There may also be other areas of your organization where a non-team

player might fit in. Repeatedly urging a loner to get with the program may only produce friction and resentment. Instead, check out the possibility that he or she might qualify for a job in another area—one that isn't as team-oriented—where the person's talents might be a perfect fit.

8.4 How can pulling employees together into a team maintain productivity during tough economic times?

Pulling survivors together into a team can overcome morale problems that occur as a consequence of downsizing. But it isn't easy. You have to communicate a reality to the remaining employees: They have a vested interest in the future success of the organization.

This, by itself, isn't sufficient. Each

member will also have personal goals. As a manager, determine what each person needs, then show him or her how working as a member of the team will allow the person to meet that objective. Involve group members by practicing participative management. Including everyone in decision making can encourage collaboration in future successes.

Tell Me More

You can lure traditional loners into the action by defining the benefits of involvement and the special

expertise they bring to the group. Don't overlook part-timers, temporary workers, and independent contractors brought into the organization during downsizing, either. They represent an important part of the team and may be able to offer unique perspectives on problems based on their wide experience working for other organizations.

8.5 How can I make new hires members of the team from their first day on the job?

Right from the start, condition new team members to believe that they're joining an elite group—that your team is made up of winners, and that they wouldn't be there if they weren't winners too.

To help the new hire feel a part of the team, you might assign an experienced employee who is a strong team player to serve as the new hire's mentor during the

newcomer's first few weeks on the job. This provides the new hire with a role model not only in terms of the work but also in terms of his or her place in the group.

Thereafter, build esprit de corps by stressing the accomplishments of the team and how the new worker's accomplishments are helping the group to do its job.

Tell Me More

Very shortly after a new team member starts work, you might want to call him or her into your office to

ask him or her, "What have you observed about how our team operates?" "What do you like about our system?" "What, specifically, don't you like, and how do you suggest we change it?" "Are you getting an idea of what your own strengths or weaknesses are in relation to the team?" "How should the team make the best use of your strengths, and how can we help to improve your weaknesses?" Make the questions open-ended, and phrase them in a way that relates to the team.

Then listen, listen, listen. New members can often see things more

clearly than insiders, since they're still viewing things at a distance. Their insights may surprise you. If they're wrong, they're wrong, and you can discount the suggestions—but always let them know that you were glad to hear them. This will make the newcomers feel that they're contributing—that they have as much of a voice as anyone else on the team.

8.6 If I build a strong team, am I abdicating power or control?

When you build a sense of teamwork, you are not abdicating power or control. While teamwork works best in a climate of participation or, better yet, shared leadership (think "empowerment"), it isn't mandatory. This is a decision that you make as *team leader*, and this is a role that you can retain or share, as you wish. The key is making sure that employees understand the ground rules by which teamwork is practiced.

Tell Me More

Some management thinkers might disagree with the paragraph above. They would argue that the more control a person has in an organization, the more power that person will have to relinquish to run an effective team. For instance, as a manager, relinquishing control, they would argue, means deliberately holding back on your point of view and allowing your team's members to spend time searching for the right answer, rather than providing it for them. This is true only if you want that kind of relationship with your

team.

8.7 What are my responsibilities as team leader?

As a team manager, your major responsibility is to model the behaviors and attitudes that you want to see within the team. For one, you need to share information with your team, just as you expect members to exchange information with one another. If you share information with just a few members of the team, then it shouldn't come as a surprise that members of your staff hoard information from one another and even question this thing

you talk about called "teamwork."

As team leader, you need to show respect for each member and the unique contribution each person makes to the team effort. Recognize that all your team's members have the right to their own opinions. You don't have to agree with them but you do need to recognize that the opinions are valid for the individuals who hold them. And praise and encourage everyone.

Tell Me More

When you first form a team, expect

that there will be some doubt about your willingness to model the behaviors described above. You have to devote time and attention to building an atmosphere of mutual support, encouragement, communication, and approval. Encourage your people to have fun. Laughter brings people together, and it's a great stress-buster.

In time, as employees get used to the idea of collaboration and cooperation as a team, the group will begin to settle in and settle down. But don't imagine that your work is over. It's just the beginning. You need to continue to treat

everyone equally, with equal respect.
Never forget to say thank you.
Celebrate individual successes and,
also, a team success—because
everyone contributed in one way or
another

8.8 Why is it important to have diversity within my team?

A diverse group provides a greater mix of viewpoints or perceptions and strengthens the team's overall processes of ideation and creativity. It doesn't matter team members' seniority, age, sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, or physical status. Pulling these individuals together gives the team the chance to capitalize on the unique strengths of the individual members while respecting their diversity in the process.

8.9 What are the four stages of cross-functional teams?

The four stages of cross-functional teams are:

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing

Some management gurus say there is even a fifth stage, mourning.

Tell Me More

The first stage is forming, during which you need to finalize the team's mission and work with team members to get agreement about what is acceptable team behavior. While there may be some disagreements over leadership and team governance, you can expect most differences to focus on the team mission.

The second stage—storming—is the phase in which you can expect conflicts to arise among members. As ideas are shared and action

plans are developed, proprietary feelings will arise about people's ideas and turf. Aware of such problems' likelihood, you should attempt to exert greater control during this phase of the team process. Knowledgeable about which members bring sensitive egos to the group, you also are more likely to be more responsive to member needs for recognition. Thus this stage isn't traumatic for team members.

During the third phase—norming—you can expect group members to really get down to business. They will take on informal roles as well as

formal assignments. For instance, one member may emerge as an organizational leader, skilled at determining what needs to get done and when, and able to get everyone pulling in the right direction. Another member might emerge as a writer-reporter, not only keeping the group's minutes but also taking on a major role in the writing of the final group report. Many members prove themselves to be quiet followers, and you know that a key responsibility to these team members is to provide a supportive environment in which they will feel comfortable sharing their ideas and

opinions.

As members play to each other's strengths and work in concert, a cross-functional team enters the fourth and final phase of team management—performing. This phase ends in completion of the team project.

Some management gurus talk about a fifth phase—mourning—as team members separate and focus fully, again, on their full-time jobs. If the team's project was exciting and very successful, some team members will find its end as stressful as its beginning.

Sustaining ties with members and keeping them informed of progress toward completion of action plans set by the group will make the mourning period easier on these individuals.

8.10 How do I choose members of a cross-functional team?

The group's mission plays a major factor in team selection. Will it solely provide feedback to others? Will it have a specific project to complete? Will you need a small project team of experts or will you require a larger group, with a broad range of backgrounds represented, for brainstorming? Answers to these questions will help you narrow your selection.

Generally, in selecting team

members, you should look for people with both knowledge in their functional areas and strong interpersonal skills, although you should be realistic enough to set aside people skills if the project has a strong technical bias. If the project calls for a major shift in organizational direction, you should know, too, that you will be better off with people who are unafraid of change than with individuals with caretaker mentalities.

Tell Me More

Needless to say, you want

individuals who are interested enough in the project to give sufficient time to it. If a prospective member doesn't see participation as a worthwhile challenge, then another candidate is better for consideration. Look also for diversity in putting together your team. Limiting the group to people with interests similar to each other or your own would be limiting the final result as well.

You should also look for creative thinkers for your team, although you don't want only hotshot thinkers. You should have more-traditional problem solvers as well on board. The best teams are made up of both types of

individuals. Creative innovators will give you an out-of-the-box idea but may not have the patience to hang in there during implementation that adapters or modifiers have. The latter are also more likely to find ways to make those breakthrough ideas work.

Further, bringing highly creative individuals who only think out of the box into a project whose goal is continuous improvement will only frustrate the creative persons because their approach to problem solving goes far beyond the goal of the project.

8.11 How can taking my employees away from the work environment enable me to build a sense of teamwork?

Getting away from the office—the two- or three-day management retreat for teambuilding—is becoming increasingly popular because:

1. Team retreats enable the team to get away from the pressures of daily operations to focus fully on its concerns as a group in

a more relaxed, leisurely, and collegial atmosphere. This includes time to identify team problems and solve them.

2. The fuller time span allows for in-depth discussion without the need to abort intensive problem-solving sessions because time has run out. Evening sessions are also possible.
3. The time away from the office allows for interpersonal contacts that were not possible onsite,

particularly having three meals and breaks together and engaging jointly in recreational activities.

Tell Me More

Ideally, you should have an external facilitator to lead group discussions during the retreat. The use of an outside facilitator gives the teambuilding session an aura of professionalism and objectivity. Unbiased, the facilitator can intervene helpfully in instances of reluctance by the group to confront interpersonal conflict, non-

participation, and so on. You might want to act as the group's facilitator, but you may not have the skills or training to pull it off properly. The best person to head the session is someone whose commitment to an open communication climate during the retreat is respected. If the team doesn't believe in this, the teambuilding effort is likely to be only marginally effective, if at all.

The retreat will raise task- or work-related questions, interpersonal issues, process issues, and systems questions. Task-related questions include: What are the goals of the team? Are there any policies, either

current or absent, that affect team effectiveness? Is the team planning-minded? Are there any procedures that are hindering effectiveness?

Interpersonal factors may be probed with questions like the following: How do you relate to the team? Do you feel you are part of it? How would you describe each team member? Are there any members who produce conflict? If so, how can we resolve this?

Process questions relate to how the group goes about doing its work: How are decisions made? What is the nature of employee input in

decisions? Are problems faced up to? How would you characterize communication in your team? Do people level with one another? Do people trust one another?

Systems influences relate to broader aspects of the group's culture that influence behavior, questions like, "What is the nature of the reward, measurement, and feedback systems? Does real accomplishment get rewarded? What would you say about the nature/ adequacy of the reward system? The career development-promotion system?

What should you, as a manager,

expect to come out of the retreat?

1. Team problems should be identified, defined precisely, prioritized, and assigned to individuals or subgroups for in-depth study and recommendations for correction.
2. The team should have learned how to do a better job of problem solving—time spent in problem solving should teach the group to treat causes rather than get fixated on

symptoms.

3. Policies and procedures are clarified or revised as necessary.
4. Group goals are defined and agreed upon.
5. You may have learned that you need to alter your management style, shifting from a more or less command style to more of a team-oriented one that generates mutual trust and respect.

6. The team should return to work with are solve to be more open, caring, trusting, cooperative, and supportive.
7. Conflicts between team members should have been brought out in the open and now are either resolved or a start has been made to resolve them.

8.12 As a new supervisor, how do I build rapport with the informal group within the department?

Even where teamwork is pervasive, informal work groups can survive. Their existence can make it harder for you to build the trust and openness that is a part of teamwork. You can ignore the existence of the informal group, but that will only make the role of leader of the group a more difficult task, with the informal group intervening each and every step of the way.

The answer for you, as a manager, is to build rapport with the leader of the informal work group. Within an informal work group, there are usually one or more members who have earned the respect of the other employees and are viewed by the other group members as a leader. By virtue of an informal leader's special role and status, he or she is in a position to "make things happen" or, conversely, "not happen." But this person also is in the position to help you become accepted and established as the formal group leader.

Tell Me More

How do you identify the leader of the informal group? Observe the interactions of the group. Who tends to speak for the other members? Which group member do the other employees seek out when they need advice or assistance?

Once you have identified the informal group leader, you must initiate and nurture a positive working relationship with that person. Ask for help and assistance from the informal leader. This doesn't mean you have to seek his or her advice

every time you make a decision. Doing so would, in fact, make you appear weak and ineffective to the other employees. A more realistic approach is to engage the informal leader on matters that personally concern group members. This does not mean that the informal leader should be given the final say on all decisions—it means simply that input should be asked of the informal leader.

Over time, the instances in which you must consult with the informal leader are likely to decline. Over time, you will gain the credibility you need with members of the group.

8.13 How can I build trust from the team?

Mutual trust is a key characteristic of an effective team. The most significant adhesive binding team members together is mutual trust. In light of financial scandals at various corporations, at no time has this been as important. Trust translates into credibility or belief in a person.

In everyday conversations, when employees speak of trust in their manager, they are thinking in terms of:

Reliability

Fairness

Truthfulness

Tell Me More

Reliability. They expect their manager to carry through on promises. If you say that you'll do something, they want to know they can count on your word.

Fairness. Employees believe that their manager will not take advantage in any way. If they disagree with their manager or have to give him or her "bad news," they

believe that they won't be punished in any way. They can trust their manager to listen to their ideas without fear of disapproval, either now or in the future.

Truthfulness. Team employees count on their manager to express feelings freely, to say what he or she means as well as mean what he or she says. There are no games being played on either side in a well-managed team. No one plays flimflam. If an employee in a high-trust team operation is uncertain what the manager meant, he or she can simply ask the manager to clarify his or her remarks.

Trust is a value, and like many values it is best understood by considering the behaviors associated with it. Consider the following:

Consistency and predictability.

Unpredictable behavior breeds anxiety and mistrust. (Visualize an employee who repeatedly and anxiously tells peers, "I hope this is what the manager wants.")

A congenial, supportive atmosphere. You should be able to express your feelings freely and thereby build a sense of intimacy among members. Feelings that are withheld make for mistrust.

Support. Behaviors like sharing, clarifying, and giving praise are all supportive and encourage trust. Belittling others or nit-picking about errors stimulate distrust.

Coaching and counseling. A willingness on your part to spend time helping an employee improve his or her performance builds trust.

Listening. Consider the alternative: "The manager never listens to what we have to say." That suggests lack of trust.

Encouragement of questions. Again, a willingness to answer questions

from the group demonstrates a desire to build trust between you and the group.

Courteousness. Considerate behavior impacts favorably on trust.

Opportunities for experimentation and risk taking. These build trust so long as failures are considered as learning opportunities, not mistakes for which team members are punished. Taking miscues in stride, as opposed to stressing errors and shortcomings, builds trust.

Accurate, reliable information. It makes for trust whereas mixed

messages make for mistrust.

Brainstorming with the group and treating all the results with respect.

Adjectives like "silly," "far-out," or "impractical" aren't used. Rather, you would say, "Let's review all of our ideas and select those on which we can get full agreement."

Insistence on face-to-face criticism of a team. This builds trust, not backstabbing, which divides team members and generates distrust.

Consensual decision making, when used appropriately. Decisions based on fiat reduce trust.

Use of win/win problem solving approaches. Making points or winning over others makes for distrust.

8.14 How can involvement of the team in department goal setting and planning improve the likelihood of achieving the plans?

Where teamwork is practiced, members often participate actively in setting group goals relating either to their operation or the corporation as a whole. Hammering out the goals collectively not only utilizes the wisdom of the entire group but also secures ownership to the group goals. People are more likely to

support that to which they have contributed and created than that which has been handed down from on high.

Tell Me More

When the team is part of the problem-solving effort, as well as planning process, you won't hear members make statements like, "I didn't think this would really work" or "That's what our manager wanted so I agreed, but I knew this wouldn't work." Further, because goals have been set as a group, even individual goals, one person's goals are not in

conflict with another team member's.

When goals are set as a group, it is clear to all members who is responsible for what. In traditional organizations in which team-building is neglected, you may find problems such as overlapping responsibility or even unassigned responsibility, problems unlikely to occur when the group as a whole sits down and makes plans and then individual members commit to aspects of the plan.

8.15 How can I engage employees in this process?

When it comes to pinning down who is responsible for what, you should hold one or more team planning sessions to ensure that team responsibilities have been clarified. The team may even develop a chart that is displayed in the workspace. That chart identifies each responsibility, the name of the person expected to complete the assignment, the date for completion, and any internal or external group support each member will need to

complete his or her tasks. Tasks are listed on the vertical axis of the chart and team members and their responsibilities can be listed on the horizontal axis.

In anticipation of the planning or goal-setting session, you should be sure that you can:

Be clear on management's planned direction for the organization.

Understand the corporate vision and be prepared to explain it to your employees.

Define your department's role in the organization. Identify what your

department has traditionally been doing and also any possible expanded role for the department, as envisioned by you and top management.

Make an outline of all points you want to cover during the meeting.

While your ideas may be revised by the input of others during the meeting, you need to go into the goal-setting or planning meeting with a clear vision of how the group will support senior management's objectives and the corporate mission.

Have a large writing board on which

you can list suggestions from your employees. Be prepared to list all the ideas that the group suggests, then pare them down to four or five objectives or goals for the year.

Prepare your employees before the meeting. Ask them to think about the present and future goals of the department and to be ready to discuss them at the meeting.

Tell Me More

At the meeting itself, you need to explain management's corporate vision, values, and goals. During the

first hour or so, you will spend planning and reviewing corporate objectives to set the stage for the subsequent discussion of how the group can contribute to achievement of those goals. Once the group is clear about the corporate objectives or goals, it can write a mission statement that describes the department's mission in relationship to the organization's. Then you, together with your staff, can determine department objectives that will support the corporate objectives and are in keeping with both the corporate and department mission.

The best-written goals reflect the SMART model; that is, they are:

Specific. They state specifically what will be accomplished.

Measurable. They are quantifiable, either by cost savings or profit contribution.

Attainable. They are achievable, even if it takes a little stretch.

Realistic. The work group believes it can achieve the objectives it has set.

Time sensitive. A date is set by which time the objective or goal is to be achieved.

As the group identifies the goals, you will be writing these down. None should be evaluated until the group has finished its creative thinking. Then you want to work with the group to choose three or four goals to pursue—or whatever number is realistic.

To make the choice, your group should begin by attempting to link some of the goals on the flipchart, reducing the number from which they choose to focus their attention on.

Goals will be defined according to their relationship to the corporate vision or mission, but it is equally important that the group consider the resources each goal will require and whether the organization can expend those resources—from dollars to people's time, to the purchase of new equipment—to achieve the goal.

Once the team chooses those goals on which to work, it then needs to develop action plans that will enable it to achieve each of its objectives. You and your staff may empower a member of the group to research an area with potential for greater profitability or to move ahead to

produce a new product service, or to cut costs. If more than one person may be involved in achieving the goal, the team might develop a flow chart, with schedule and specific assignments for each staff member. The flow chart diagrams each of the actions to be taken and the sequence in which they must occur. Names of specific staff members are placed beside each task in the flow chart.

Some action plans are best developed by forward scheduling, that is, planning moves from start-up to completion date. Backward scheduling begins with a completion

date, and the work group works out how it will finish the project and achieve its objectives by that time.

Afterward, while writing up the goal-setting session, you should evaluate the final plans. To help in this review, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the plan contribute to the achievement of the department goals and, therefore, corporate goals?
- Are the underlying assumptions valid?
- Is it clear what is to be done

and why?

- Is it clear who will be responsible for the tasks that make up the plan?
- Is the plan feasible? If it isn't, how can it be made feasible?
- How can the plan's progress be monitored to determine if it is succeeding?
- Is the cost of implementation higher than payback?
- How will we measure the plan's success?

8.16 If my team develops action plans that could fail, what should I do?

If a review of the plans suggests there may be some weaknesses, then it may be appropriate to spend some further time revising them. Even then, despite the best efforts of your team, the plans may not succeed. The group may have made assumptions that proved to be untrue. Or they tried to plan too far ahead. Or unforeseen events occurred either within or outside the organization, beyond the team's control.

Plans may also depend on others' efforts, and these individuals may not be motivated to help.

Sometimes, the plan depends on some help from senior management but top management is unable to make the promised commitment of people or other resources. Whatever the reason, some of the plans made during the planning or goal-setting meeting just don't work. Then, you need to modify the plans.

Tell Me More

You don't want to let your team get in the habit of walking away from a

goal or plan if it isn't working. Generally during the goal setting, you spent some time identifying the factors critical to the action plan and estimating how they could go awry. Actions are taken then to prevent these problems from happening. But when problems still occur, the group should be able to come together to develop a contingency plan (a Plan B) that will enable the group to still achieve the objective. The team rethinks how it is to achieve the planned outcome. New avenues are identified, and a new schedule is determined to achieve the goal.

Sometimes, a review of the situation

suggests that the goal at this point can't be reached. Modification of the plan or even the goal isn't sufficient. Or a new plan may negatively affect an existing plan, drawing vital resources from it, and the new goals and objectives have to be adjusted. Or one department's objective overlaps or conflicts with another's. Then you and your team need to make tough decisions about available resources and areas of responsibility.

Throughout this process, you need to be the department cheer-leader, maintaining group enthusiasm by pointing to accomplishments.

8.17 What mistakes do managers make that undermine team productivity?

A sense of teamwork is easily destroyed by a manager who fails to practice what he or she preaches. Such a manager promises to share decision making with staff members but does not do so. Candid and full debate over an issue is abandoned by the manager who talks about team meetings and shared leadership yet dominates meetings and hoards responsibility. The manager may talk about

empowering team members or, at least, letting team members engage in participative management—influence how work is done, if not how decisions regarding the work are made—but does neither. They are manipulations designed to get maximum work from the department. Instead, decisions tend to be made by the formal leader with little involvement of other team members.

Managers may involve members in meetings. But the bottom line in involvement of employees is this: Are member ideas utilized to reach the decision?

This is not to say that teamwork demands that leaders abdicate their authority and give it to team members, as already mentioned. Teams need to agree up front about how they will operate. If you want to build a sense of teamwork yet retain a strong leadership role, all you need do is communicate that to the team.

Tell Me More

Let's assume that you want to share leadership of the team with its members. If that is so, then here are some further steps to take:

The team structure must be supported by senior management and the organizational structure—the team concept can fail from lack of support and commitment of top management. The team structure should:

Focus less on task activities and more on team member relationships.

Encourage employees to display self-discipline and to take responsibility for their own behavior and actions.

Offer sufficient training so all know best how to operate

as a team.

8.18 What can I do to get my employees to think for themselves?

If you really want your employees to take responsibility for decisions they make, you have to teach them how to think critically. Further, you have to convince them that you want them to do so. The first is simpler than the second. To train employees to think critically and come up with their own solutions to problems:

- Turn employees' questions back to them.

- Encourage individual members to go back to consult with other members of the team.
- Meet resistance with patient persistence.
- If employees make a mistake, use the error in judgment as a learning opportunity.

Tell Me More

Turn employees' questions back to them. When they bring a problem to

you, don't be so quick to offer a solution, even if it's obvious to you. Ask the individual, "What do you think you should do?" Then listen to his answer and avoid commenting until he is finished. You may need to ask some follow-up questions in order to get the employee to think of a solution on his own.

Encourage individual members to go back to consult with other members of the team. Instead of providing answers, suggest your employees ask for advice from coworkers who may have had the same situation to deal with. Cement the team by having them work

together to seek out an answer. Help individual employees to learn from people who simply do their jobs well and independently and who also can be a source of help in the department in developing individual team members' problem-solving skills.

You may meet resistance from some staff members who prefer to avoid responsibility. Meet their resistance with patient persistence. Yes, there will be those employees who are perfectly happy with the status quo and have little interest in making the right decision or solving an ongoing problem. They prefer a

9-to-5 job with little responsibility beyond doing what they are told. However, with some persistence and the help of members of the team (think "peer pressure"), you may be able to encourage these individuals to take on more responsibility. If they do, and are successful, congratulate them.

If employees make a mistake, use the error in judgment as a learning opportunity, not a reason for pointing blame. Finally, use the rest of the team: Focus on what these individuals do best and ask for help from them for the team.

8.19 Why should team members be involved in the selection process?

As a manager, you have two choices. You can hire someone and let the individual make a place for himself or herself. Or you can involve the team in the decision and thereby shorten the timeframe between the new hire being considered an outsider and being regarded as a team member. The transition won't only be faster—it will occur in a less traumatic fashion for the new hire.

Tell Me More

Team members should be involved in the selection process as early as possible—even in interviews with prospective candidates. After all, the final choice will have to work effectively with the rest of the team. And participation in the interviews will give team members a good idea of the new hire's strengths and personality and enable them to relate to him or her more readily.

Even if you don't include the team in the recruitment process, you should ask them to help the new person

adjust to the workplace. Certainly they might invite him or her to their coffee and lunch breaks. You want the new arrival to have a warm, enthusiastic welcome.

To be perceived as a member of the team may not be important to everyone, but to the majority of people it can be gratifying to feel accepted from the first day. With the additional support you provide as supervisor of the new hire, you can begin to get work from the newcomer from the first day.

Chapter 9: Change Management

9.1 How can I measure my acceptance of change?

No matter what the change is or when it occurs, people respond to it gradually. The four steps that people go through when dealing with change are:

1. Denial
2. Resistance
3. Exploration
4. Acceptance

If you find yourself going through these four stages, you are no less

receptive to change than the average person. But being aware of where you are in the process can help you adapt more easily as well as help other people adapt.

Tell Me More

The four reactions to change that everyone goes through are:

Denial. At the first signs of a coming change, many people refuse to acknowledge it. They don't believe change is necessary or that the proposed change will work. Do you experience this sense of denial when

a change is proposed?

Resistance. It is one thing to deny the need for a change, it is another to resist the change once it has been publicized and is under way. Are you among those who refuse to accept a change? That, too, is a sign of difficulty in dealing with change. When change is imminent, you need to be ready to support its implementation. As a manager, you also need to help your employees to accept the change—both the good and the bad points.

Exploration. The third stage people go through involves a rational

examination of the pros and cons of the change. Do you examine the implications of a change, or do you refuse to even listen to others about the advantages and disadvantages of the change?

Acceptance. When change works, people realize it and accept the change. In time, it becomes the new status quo. How about you? If you find yourself dragging your feet when change has occurred, venting about it months after the fact, then you may have a serious problem.

By knowing that these reactions are normal and figuring out where you

are in the process you can adjust your behavior to adapt better to change. You can also figure out where your employees are in the process to help them adjust to the change effort.

To further analyze your attitude toward change, here are some statements. Do they reflect your actions?

- "I like to look for more efficient or effective ways of getting the work done."
- "I have an open mind to new ideas and possibilities."

- "I am known for anticipating and leading change within my department."
- "I seize opportunities to reward, celebrate, and encourage successful change."
- "I like to work closely with people who are eager to improve the organization's policies and procedures and other shortcomings."

The more of these statements that reflect your behavior, the more a change enabler you are.

9.2 How can I know when change is in the wind so that my department can prepare for it?

You need to monitor events within your organization. This way, you will learn about changes that may involve your department. You shouldn't let yourself be blind to signals of change nor should your staff believe that you are not in the loop on these issues. Your staff has to think that you know what is up and, more important, will represent their concerns if the demands from senior management aren't reasonable.

To ensure you have a voice in the final change, volunteer to help the change happen if it is inevitable anyway. Thus, you will be in a position to influence the decisions made about the change plan and its implementation.

Tell Me More

If you want to ensure that you are in the loop and can even anticipate change before it is announced, you might want to do the following:

Eat lunch with coworkers. It's

amazing how much you can learn about what's happening elsewhere in the organization during lunch, even during a coffee break taken with a colleague.

Read the reports you receive. It is very easy to get so buried in paperwork that you put aside reports about activities not directly related to your job. But skimming such documents, even if it means printing digitized versions, can alert you to developments under way that could directly or indirectly affect your department.

Socialize with your own manager.

Use this less as a time to let him or her know how much you have done—to brag about yourself or department—but as an opportunity to learn what your manager is involved with. From what you hear, you may be able to anticipate events in the future.

Involve yourself in cross-functional teams that might impact your department. If you are asked to participate, say "yes." Don't be cavalier about the invitation—likely, you wouldn't have been asked to participate if there were no reason for you to be involved.

9.3 How can I be a change leader?

Once plans are announced, share them with your staff. Their reaction to the news will be based, in part, on your own reaction to the change.

Role model a positive attitude. Don't stop there, however. Identify the concerns of your team members and attempt to address them if you can. Corporate goals tend to drive the need for change, but these goals have to be explained in terms that your staff can understand—from their impact on work done, to the

need for new skills, to greater organizational profitability, all of which could increase the likelihood of job security. You should also be prepared to clear up any misconceptions. There may also be bad news associated with the change. You have to be prepared to communicate this to your staff members before it reaches the office grapevine (see [Chapter 1](#)). Better that your employees hear it from you than another employee.

Some changes may bring cause for mourning, like a series of layoffs. Give your employees time to grieve. Offer compassion and empathy to

your staff. Let your employees see that you also are feeling the loss. Generally, left to run its course, this mourning period will taper off as employees adapt to the circumstances. Once they have become reconciled to their losses, they will accept the change and be ready to move on with a renewed sense of purpose. The task of transition will demand all the attention of your staff members, thereby distracting them from any further grieving.

If employees know you are opposed to a change, it is best to be honest. If they suspect or even know your

feelings, let them know the reason for your concerns but also point out the need for change—how not taking any action could have more serious repercussions than pursuing the plan—and follow this up with a statement that you plan to support the effort and you hope your staff will support you in this.

9.4 How do I get commitment to a change from my staff?

Begin with your self. What was your first reaction when you heard about the change? Was it fear or elation? Was it confusion or understanding? Are you looking forward to the change or are you worried about its effect on the status quo? Your employees are likely to feel as you do about the change. You need to ensure they understand not only the nature of the change but its ramifications on the work they do.

Meet with your staff as soon as the plans are made public to answer employee questions and undo any misconceptions. Observe the members of your group as you discuss the change with them. How are members of your staff reacting? Don't assume that silence is a positive response. It can be a sign of uncertainty, passive resistance, or active opposition to the idea.

Would involving your employees in decisions related to the change as well as to its implementation reduce resistance to the change? The more that people feel they can contribute and make a difference, even in the

face of change, the more positive they will be about the change process. Those who feel powerless are more likely to feel victimized.

Tell Me More

If there is one point not to forget when telling employees about a change, it is the need to make a compelling case for it. Many change experts attribute the failure of change initiatives to a lack of sense of urgency about the need to change. There is often too much emphasis on the who, what, when, and where and too little on the why

of a change plan.

Such sense of urgency needs to be balanced with feelings of personal confidence that the employees are capable of turning the situation around. Creativity and risk taking are less likely in an environment of fear.

Since change means risk, you must expect that mistakes will be made. But your message, in the face of mistakes, must be that the only failure you're concerned about is the failure to try anything at all. Besides, problems routinely occur with any change initiative. Solving those problems may generate other

problems, which will cause further problems. That is just the nature of change. All you can do is to address each problem calmly as it occurs.

Another way to get cooperation and support is to begin your change efforts where you are less likely to encounter problems. At the same time, you want to begin with a bold step. Gradual introduction of a change effort is likely to generate the least opposition but it also tends to give the impression that the change agent really isn't committed to the idea. About 50 percent of those who hear about a change are undecided at first, and too weak a

start or too much flexibility early on can prompt them ultimately to side against the change, joining the 20 percent who are adamantly opposed to the change.

Most change initiatives begin with about 30 percent in favor due to the logic of the argument or their awareness of the personal benefits from the change.

9.5 I worry that I won't be able to handle objections to a change in a staff meeting. What can I do to overcome objections in that situation?

Be prepared for questions, if not outright resistance.

The surest way to overcome anticipated objections is to incorporate them into your announcement. Make your presentation and state any anticipated objections as though they

are yours, then disprove each, one by one. You'll be amazed how many times potential objectors to the idea of a change will get into the spirit of the need for change and wind up supporting the plan.

If an objection is voiced, listen intently to it. Try to understand not only the objection but also the motivation behind it. Ask questions if you aren't clear about the problem.

Tell Me More

Even before you respond to the objection, compliment the objector

for identifying either the reason for the proposed change or a problem with the change plan. For instance, "You're right—cost was an important factor in making this decision" or "Yes, we have a short timeframe in which to bring the new system on." Then, throw the objection back to the employee, encouraging him or her either to expand on his or her conclusion or to suggest how the change effort might be improved.

If rising costs is behind a policy change, you might ask the objector, "How much do you think we could save with this change?" If the schedule is tight, and it will be tough

to meet, you might ask the objector, "What steps will be the most time-intensive?" or "Do you have some ideas about how we might save time?"

Don't become defensive or attack the questioner. Rather, focus on the statement or issue raised. With conviction, respond to the comment made. "If we can finish A within the first week, we should have more time to concentrate on B, and complete C and the entire project within the timeframe." Prepare your response to that question and subsequent questions, each time demonstrating how the change won't

be negated by the objection. By winning these small battles, you should overcome most of the overt opposition to the change plan when you present news about a change

Before you close the meeting, confirm that you've handled the objections raised. "I believe I've handled all the questions. Are there any other concerns?"

9.6 What do I do if there are people on my staff adamantly opposed to the change?

To overcome resistance to change, you need to understand what prompts the people to resist the change.

Here is an action plan you should consider to reduce resistance and increase the likelihood of successful implementation:

1. Provide advance notice.
2. Communicate the why.

3. Role model your own commitment to the change.
4. Listen to what your employees say.
5. Get people involved.
6. Communicate, communicate, communicate.
7. Identify hard-core resistance.

Tell Me More

The three major reasons for

opposition to change are the following:

1. *Scarcity of information.*

Fear of the unknown lies at the heart of much of the resistance. Strategies for change are often created by an isolated group, usually senior management, and employees have no way to gauge the impact the change will have on their positions (an immediate source of concern) or even how management expects them to implement the

strategy.

2. *Lack of input.* Employees rarely embrace change when they are not involved in its planning.
3. *Job insecurity.* Change often challenges them to adopt new skills and abandon old habits, and sometimes directly endangers their jobs. Responsibilities may be increased, decreased, or shifted. More people may be needed, or fewer people may be sufficient.

Here are things you can do to help employees overcome their resistance to change:

Provide advance notice. If you know about a change in advance, notify your employees so they will have an opportunity to "get used to the idea."

Communicate the why. This addresses the first source of resistance—scarcity of information. Your employees will now understand why a change has to be made. Any stumbling blocks or potential disadvantages should be addressed. This procedure effectively diffuses feelings of being "out of control."

Role model your own commitment to the change. Your behavior will demonstrate to staff whether or not you see real benefits in the change being proposed. If they see that you are supportive of the plan, they are more likely to be supportive as well. Be careful when you do this; you may be perceived as putting down the current procedure, method, or approach, and there may be employees who may see this as a criticism of their current performance.

Listen to what your employees say. People need to feel that they can air their concerns and raise their

questions without fear of retribution. Open discussions of the change can also reveal valid frustrations that, if addressed, may reduce resistance.

Get people involved. Give employees who might resent lack of input into the change the opportunity to have input in the implementation. When people feel involved in the process of change, they are more likely to be emotionally invested in it and will work toward making it a success.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Put an end to pernicious rumors about the change

by making yourself available to people with questions about the change. If job security will not be affected—and you know that for sure—let your employees know this is so. Honest, open information can reduce stress and also resistance.

Identify hard-core resistance.

Determine those most actively against the change. They will need special attention from you. If their opposition is so strong, and a one-on-one meeting with them in which you point out why their support is so important isn't effective, you may have to arrange a transfer out of your department or even consider

terminating these otherwise
hardworking employees.

9.7 How can I help employees cope with change that requires new skills and practices?

Change usually demands the acquisition of new skills and implementation of new practices. Daily routines must be reprogrammed. While this is happening, employees will feel threatened, questioning their competencies (skills, abilities, and knowledge).

Under these circumstances, you need to assume the role of coach to

help your employees develop the skills they need to survive the change. As a first step, ask yourself, "Given the modifications we are attempting, what new knowledge or skills will my staff need?" Then ask yourself, "Which of these do they already possess?" Measure the answers to these questions against each other. Identify the gap between your staff's present understanding and those things it needs to know to manage the new practices or procedures. This will reveal what training objectives should be introduced. It will also help you to calculate how long it will take to fill

the gap. For example, if employees in your shipping department have used bar code devices to scan outgoing orders, using a more sophisticated system with microchips is only a few steps removed from their present duties. However, if they have been performing this task manually, they will need more time to adapt to the new system.

Tell Me More

Share your perspective of the learning curve with senior management so that it doesn't

expect wondrous transformations to take place overnight. Insist that your staff be taught the appropriate skills and be given the resources they need to implement the change plan.

If the change affects the entire department, then group training is the perfect means for closing information gaps and building new competencies. Hold such sessions in any environment that encourages a free exchange of questions and ideas. The skill training, however, should be done on site, in the workplace.

So far, you have identified what your

employees need to know and you have determined what knowledge gaps need to be filled. Now you have to decide how to teach your employees.

Depending on your own training skills, you can outsource the responsibility or you can assume it yourself. If you decide to assume it yourself, begin with the familiar. Whenever possible, use your staff's current skills and knowledge as a framework to help them understand what they must stop doing, start doing, or do differently to implement the change.

Present new information to your staff sequentially. Our human brains resemble hard drives in one respect: They can crash. Don't overload your employees' with new information. Feed them information in logical, ordered bites—the smaller, the better. Allow your staff sufficient time to absorb each new element of the process.

Of course, give them the opportunity to practice what you have taught, and practice again and again. Repeat new activities until your staff members are comfortable with them. Repetition sustains memory. The more frequently your employees

practice recently learned skills, the more quickly they will settle into the new routine.

Offer positive feedback. Do not demand perfection during the early stages of the transition. Be patient with mistakes. Focus not on the error at first but rather on what the employee did right. Then identify how the employee went awry. Never ridicule an employee for making an error. Focus, too, only on those actions that affect critical aspects of the new task.

When employees admit to making an error, compliment them for their

candor. Let them know that these errors are a vital part of the change process. They teach us what to do by illustrating what not to do. Of course, compliment employees when they show progress in correcting any slipups.

Throughout this learning process, encourage questions and never dismiss any queries as "dumb." If an employee is asking the "wrong" question, it is simply a sign that he or she lacks adequate information. See that he or she gets the information essential to do the task correctly.

9.8 How can I use small improvements to build on a major shift in operations?

Since small successes can energize those involved in a change effort, organize the effort so that there are visible positive results early on. When you achieve these successes, celebrate them. Reinforce the positive behaviors that led to the success. Initiating a major change is an uphill battle and employees can become depressed in the midst of the effort unless they see evidence of progress.

Successful small changes can build employee morale, particularly if these small changes can be measured in light of improved sales performance, customer loyalty, or market share.

Tell Me More

If there is real concern among employees, consider a pilot program to test the thinking behind the change effort. The success of the pilot program will build enthusiasm for a full-out effort.

Preferably, try to demonstrate a balanced picture of progress in all the areas that you set out to change. Schedules and measurements should give an indication of specific achievements, but pay attention also to intangibles, like employee morale. You want your greatest progress in areas of significant benefit, but even minimal progress in one area is worthwhile if it encourages progress in other, more significant areas.

When you achieve quick wins, find ways to recognize and reward your employees. The importance of these short-term successes can't be overestimated. Eyes are always on

change efforts. And opponents of change will be looking for proof that an idea won't work. But it's hard to argue with success.

It's tougher to justify change on the basis of soft data—things like improved morale, trust, loyalty, stress levels, or job satisfaction—than of hard data—like productivity increases, bigger market share, faster delivery, higher customer satisfaction indices, shorter product development cycles, and high initial sales. Once these hard-data gains are achieved, build on them. This keeps the momentum of the change effort going, which will give you an

opportunity to change other elements (like structure or systems) that don't fit well with the initial change.

9.9 How do I motivate my staff to see the opportunity that comes with change?

You shouldn't promise something you can't be sure you can deliver—like a raise or a promotion. Focus on what the change is expected to do. If that might open up opportunities for advancement, you may mention that but as "one possible result," nothing more.

Turn the change plan itself into an opportunity by pointing up the negative risks if the change isn't

made. Should you still have doubters, the first payoffs in a business sense as you implement the plan should raise enthusiasm and convince people of the wisdom of the new approach.

Tell Me More

Alter the gripes and groans to cheers and enthusiasm by keeping the gains or benefits of the change in the forefront of all conversations about the change. This is certainly the time to stress the positives and thereby override the understandable uncertainties, fears, and anxieties.

For instance, when talking about the need for the change, don't neglect to point out the consequences of not implementing the change. And use pilot projects or trial runs wherever practicable prior to making the change final. Experimental runs can help to "debug" the change effort before the total change is implemented, and such trial runs will provide concrete evidence that the new approach is realistic and workable.

9.10 How do I involve employees in change efforts without abdicating my own authority over the final decisions?

All managers have a distinct leadership style.

Some managers practice a *command/directive* style, leaving their staff little opportunity to influence the plan. These managers tend to do no more than let everyone vent their displeasure with the directed change and then expect

them to get on with it.

Managers who tend to be extremely *supportive* will handhold the staff through the change process. The group may or may not have the skills and interest to deal with the change, but it doesn't matter with this kind of manager, who micromanages the change process. The employees may be asked their opinion at each stage, but they have learned that their ideas will usually not be heard.

A laissez-faire leader abdicates his or her responsibility for the change to the group. The leader may believe that the team truly has all the skills it

needs to make the change a reality or he or she may believe that the change isn't likely to work or be as successful as others say and consequently prefers to devote his or her time to other, more productive activities.

If a manager truly believes in the change process and respects the know-how of his or her employees, he or she may involve them in the change effort yet serve to lead the initiative, ensuring that the change is always on the right course. In practicing a *participative* style, a manager doesn't abdicate responsibility as does the laissez-

faire manager. Rather, the manager shares responsibility for the success of the change with his or her department, listening and incorporating their ideas into the final plan.

Tell Me More

If you practice this participative leadership style, there may be suggestions made that you disagree with. At that time, you may want to practice the Socratic style of managing. If you recall, Socrates never rejected any of the ideas from his students. Rather, he discussed

them with his students to help them think through their ideas and improve them. That's the role of a true participative manager.

Besides, change is too important and potentially complex to let it be a one-manager kind of thing. The wise manager will involve his or her employees in all aspects of the change process: conceptualization/visioning, depicting the desired outcome, implementation, monitoring of results, assessing actual end results/outcomes and making adjustments/fine-tuning as indicated.

And keep in mind one point: Inclusion of all employees does not mean you need to achieve consensus. While inclusion and listening are critical to building commitment to change, the process of exchange and communication is not to be confused with consensus. At times, change needs to be done without getting everybody fully committed, although it is helpful to invite everybody once or twice to get on board.

9.11 I've seen change inaugurated, then things return to before the change. How can I avoid slippage back into old ways?

Success carries a hidden risk. Having achieved excellent results through effective change, the change agents lapse into complacency. They don't monitor the project to ensure that new policies and procedures continue to be practiced or follow-up plans are initiated.

Such slippages can be prevented by developing stretch targets to move the change continually forward. These new objectives should be communicated clearly to everyone. Progress should be tracked. You will be monitoring your employees' work while the plan is in its transitory stage. Don't stop there. Use frequent meetings and rely heavily on "management by walking around" after the fact to see how people are coping with the change. By not following up with staff, you may be unintentionally communicating that the change isn't that important—and employees may go back to old

ways.

Tell Me More

To keep moving forward with change initiatives, ask yourself these questions:

1. Have I circulated to all stakeholders the action steps to sustain the change?
2. Do stakeholders and senior management know the benefits of the change initiative?

3. Have I held a celebration to commend the team for its initiative?
4. Have I moved forward to study progress and improve on the current effort—in particular, formed a group of past and new members to identify the next steps in improving operations?
5. Do the new goals have due dates for implementation?

9.12 How can I create a culture that will encourage flexibility and innovation?

Surviving in today's world of change requires a culture that encourages innovation. As a manager, you need to develop a "possibility mindset." What does that mean in terms of specific behaviors? You have to demonstrate a willingness to hear out employees' ideas and be an initiator yourself, looking for opportunities for positive change.

When people bring their suggestions

to you, you need to offer constructive feedback in a supportive and caring manner. Coach them to think critically and to identify and address shortcomings in ideas they may have. Work with them to rid potentially good ideas of weaknesses.

Encourage creative thinking by setting up ground rules for meetings and brainstorming sessions. Establish guidelines to delay judgment and evaluation until after the idea-generation portion has ended. To ensure that these meetings are effective, hold training to teach your team the types of

behaviors most effective for stimulating new ideas.

Add reminders via signs or posters on walls and desks that you and the department are open to new ideas—rosy possibilities—and want to serve as their coach in identifying these possibilities, not their critic.

Tell Me More

Any effort to change corporate culture won't be completed overnight. Most experts agree that you should expect to work months and sometimes years. The larger

and more physically dispersed your organization, the longer it will take to change. The older and more experienced your management team, the longer it will take to change—and the more necessary it may be to change.

No matter how you want to change your organization's culture, you should provide a clear picture of what you want the culture to be. How great is the gap between what the culture is now and what it needs to be? What do you want your employees to believe? What norms should be guiding your employees' behavior in the future?

Through words and deeds, communicate that picture to your employees. Become the champion for the new culture. Demonstrate by your own behaviors how important this culture-change business is.

If you have an opportunity to hire an employee during the effort to change the culture and climate of your operation, recruit people who believe in and advocate your vision. It's easy to teach skills, but tough to teach new values, so recruit values. Don't terminate defenders of the status quo unless you have no other option. If so, let them go. Demonstrate to your staff that employees either can

be part of the future or a remnant of history. Give resisters every opportunity to change. If they won't, ease them out of your organization.

9.13 How can I get my team through a period of change overload?

Continuous change can lead to severe employee burnout. Some symptoms of burnout are that change loses its importance, and employees grow tired of going from one new program to another. It seems to them as if it is more important to management to implement a change quickly than to conduct a realistic assessment of its chances of success.

You can't eliminate the stress that

comes with continual change, but you can reduce employee cynicism toward change initiatives by sharing your long-term vision, as well as short-term goals, with your employees. They will, then, be able to see how proposed changes will help to achieve that vision. They may even become sources of new ideas.

Tell Me More

It will also help if employees are kept in touch with the business environment. If employees are closely connected to customers' needs and are alert to the actions of

competitors, they won't be sent into shock when circumstances cause you to shift directions or priorities. To ensure their appreciation of the reasons behind the change, explain the change clearly to all involved. Tell your employees the rationale for it. Specify their role in it. Describe both the short-term and the long-term implications. Don't let doubts grow. Such doubts will only create resistance, generate frustration, and trigger further feelings of stress in today's leaner organizations. If the stressful feelings need an outlet, hold gripe sessions within your operation to let employees voice

their frustrations.

9.14 What do I do if I discover a project just won't work?

Not every change you lead or support succeeds. There always comes a time when you have to fish or cut bait. If the change effort not only isn't working but the results anticipated are unlikely to occur, then it is time to cut bait.

More important than the fact you have to kill a project is how you do it. You don't want to discourage other change efforts by your actions. Don't pretend the failure didn't

happen. Rather, address the reason the project is being declared at an end. Share with those involved with you in the project what was learned from the effort. And, most important, discuss with your supporters what will be done differently in the future with change initiatives to increase the odds of their success. Go out on a positive note.

Chapter 10: Life and Career Skills

10.1 How can I reduce stress due to work?

Actually, you have two concerns: controlling your own feelings of burnout and minimizing the stress your employees feel.

As an effective manager, you should provide employees with the information they need to do a good job. You should give regular feedback. You should say "thank you"—regularly. You should involve your employees in decisions that affect their work—don't let them feel powerless—and be sure to

recognize a job well done. If you can't provide money, then consider other forms of recognition. Establish easy-to-use channels of communication so they can tell you when there are problems (like unrealistic deadlines).

Maybe they need help. If so, see that they get the resources they need. In short, be alert to employee needs for help. Most important, if you see one of your employees is evidently tired and suffering from work overload, then you should look for ways to reduce his or her responsibilities. If you suspect that an employee is putting in extra hours

from fear of being laid off, then provide reassurance if you can, or level with the employee about his or her lack of a future within the company.

What about yourself? To help minimize the stress that stems from overwork, the best advice is to learn to pace yourself. The most successful managers I know are those who have learned to go on overdrive for a period, then slow down for a time, then speed up once more, and at the end of the day take a break.

Tell Me More

If you feel this stressed out while at the office, take a walk around the block. If you don't want to leave the office, at least step away from your desk—say, walk over to the office copier to do your own copying. The object is to get away for a brief period from that stack of paperwork or long list of e-mails awaiting your attention.

Don't worry how you will fit a big project into your workday. Plan, instead, how you will get it done. Work on it when you feel most

energetic and can be most productive. Ask yourself, "When is it easiest for me to do a task? When is it toughest?" If you don't know, keep a record over a period of time, and then try to adjust your work schedule so you do the most stressful tasks when your energy is at its highest level.

Finally, try to put people and situations into perspective. When you look at each situation at the office as a matter of life and death, you can develop tremendous feelings of stress. Ask yourself, "What is the worst that can happen if I don't complete this project on

schedule? Will the world end?" The answer: no. Ask yourself, "Will I lose my job?" The answer: unlikely. "Will my manager think less of me? The answer: perhaps, but more likely the extra time taken might produce a better report or analysis, which will please your manager, particularly if he or she has been warned in advance about the delay.

Frame your questions to evaluate potentially stressful situations and help keep overreaction to a minimum.

In any discussion of work fatigue and burnout, mention needs to be

made not only of the long hours but also of other factors, like:

Task demands. Managerial positions are particularly stressful because of time deadlines, performance evaluation responsibilities and decision-making activities. Boundary-spanning activities can also be demanding, as they require dealing with myriad people with different backgrounds, interests, and demands.

Role demands. When responsibilities and roles aren't clear, stress can occur. Over time, the stresses can lead to burnout.

Differences between an individual's values or beliefs and those of leaders within his or her organization are another cause of role conflict.

Physical environment. A poor work environment can add to the feelings of stress, especially if it is in conjunction with long hours. Think of some cubicles that are about the size of walk-in closets, or office environments in which employees freeze in winter and perspire in summer from poorly regulated thermostats.

Interpersonal demands. Differences with others with whom you work can

cause work to be less pleasant. In time, interpersonal conflicts can mean severe pressure on the body and spirit and lead to burnout. Fellow workers with abrasive personalities are sources of interpersonal stress. So is an authoritarian management style. Even informal relationships, however, can add to stress. While friendships can be supportive, they can also be demanding if they impose behavioral norms.

10.2 How can I deal with workaholism?

Some people fall into the "all work, all the time" pattern and find it hard to get out. Without close family ties or friends to draw them away from their work lives, they may become so consumed that they never develop outside lives. Their work becomes a crutch, one that isn't very sturdy given the precariousness of the job market.

If someone has become such a workaholic that he or she no longer has any other outside interests, then

he or she should consider the need for counseling.

But sometimes what seems like workaholism is something entirely different. The individual may be consumed with one assignment after another, but he or she may have other interests. It is simply that the individual doesn't know how to say no—whether it's to his or her manager, peers, or employees—when the person is asked to take on a new task.

There are individuals who have interests outside of work and would like to pursue them but worry about

alienating the person asking for help. If this is your problem, consider the response: "I'd like to help if I can fit it into my schedule." You can then go on to explain that you have other tasks that have to take priority. This way, you aren't rejecting either the person or his or her request—you are simply telling the truth.

Tell Me More

If it's just a matter of time—and you don't have it now but you might have it later—and you would like to help your colleague, offer to help if the person can wait a few days. But if

that isn't acceptable, then be firm in refusing. Don't equivocate. If you say you might be able to help and then fail to come through as promised, you can ruin your reputation as someone who can be depended on.

If the request comes from your manager, then the burden is on him or her to decide whether this request takes precedence over those priorities you have agreed on earlier. If our manager is willing to give you more time to complete your current work to free you to handle this new priority, then say yes to the assignment. But most frequently,

your manager will reconsider the request, freeing you to finish what you were already doing.

10.3 I seem to work from crisis to crisis. What am I doing wrong?

You may have to look at the assignments more closely. A lot of managers carry such heavy workloads that they habitually plunge into one assignment after another without any thought as to how the tasks should best be handled or what work they should do immediately (think "urgent") and what work can wait. They are working harder and faster than ever before but not necessarily more productively because they spend too

little time in thinking through each task first.

A multitude of tasks may pile up, and they all seem to be labeled "urgent." The end result for you is that you are spending too much time putting out fires instead of preventing them. Strategic time management can go a long way toward preventing the forest fires. By "strategic time management," I mean looking at each task from the perspective of its importance to your department's plans and mission.

Tell Me More

Proceed methodically. Giving a little thought to a situation may enable you to identify a smarter way to handle a problem or situation. More work or longer hours aren't the solutions to every operational problem. When faced with a last-minute task, pause for a moment. Count to ten before acting. Taking a breath or two may be sufficient to prevent needless wheel spinning and unnecessary pressure. You will have time to consider how the task can be done more efficiently or more effectively, or both. Maybe the work can be outsourced? Perhaps there is another, less expensive way to

accomplish the objective? If time is the scarce resource, then there may be a firm that can make up lost time in delivery to your customer?

Stopping to catch your breath will also enable you to determine whether what you have in front of you is a real crisis. Determine what warrants a frantic pace and what can be done in due time, and respond accordingly. Certainly, don't allow someone who is insecure about your ability to complete a task on time to throw your own priorities out of whack. A realistic view of what is a crisis allows you to make decisions about how to spend your

time.

10.4 How can I balance the demands of the workplace with my family obligations and personal interests?

Truth is, we can't have everything. Rather, we need to determine what we want, then "rightsize" our lives to achieve our wants. That may entail something as extensive as toggling between intensive focus on work and intensive focus on a nonwork life, giving all of ourselves to our jobs for a time, then cutting back (maybe quitting altogether) for a year to

focus on our families. Or it may demand rethinking how we work, like working part-time, telecommuting, or starting up our own business from home. Once we allow ourselves to think of alternative work options, we may surprisingly find a way to balance work and family in a manner that not only gives us time for our own lives but makes what we do or how we do it much better.

Tell Me More

Sometimes such alternative work options—rightsizing our lives—are not available or are unacceptable to

us. If our time with family and friends is critical, then we need to rethink our business priorities. The solution may be to back away from heavy commitment to our careers and focus on our families, hobbies, or other interests. This doesn't mean quitting our jobs. Rather, it means willingly stepping off the fast track, seeking a less intense work life. If the current work doesn't allow this, then a change in position, even with lower pay, may be worth the increase in free time to use for family.

10.5 How can I minimize intrusions on my personal time?

You can argue against this practice but you can't avoid it once it becomes policy. You can minimize intrusions on your time by making plans before you leave to ensure that most critical issues either are already handled or will be handled by others trained to do so. Teach them what they need to know, then empower them to take over in your absence. If your company demands you call in regularly, alert your staff when you will call—the day and time.

This will eliminate the sudden call from the office and your frantic race to your room from the beach, or the unproductive call to the office spent on "hold" as people look for someone for you to speak with.

Tell Me More

Take your laptop if you must, but put it away and limit your use to important e-mail messages from your office and customers. Spend time with your staff to identify the nature of documents that should be forwarded to you. Staff members can leave voicemail messages on

your cell phone to alert you to a document being sent that will require your review.

Most important, don't let a heavy workload discourage you from taking time away from the office—sufficient time to refresh and reenergize you for the work you are sure to find back in your office when you return.

10.6 How can I ensure that I get credit for the work I do?

If you want your performance appraisal to reflect your accomplishments, then you should go to your next performance appraisal with a written list. If your manager isn't likely to remember each and every staff member's efforts over the quarter or year, this will ensure that your personnel records make mention of them.

You can add to the likelihood that your achievements get his or her

attention by focusing your efforts on those activities that are critical to achievement of the department's objectives or, better yet, your corporation's strategic mission.

If you want the kind of recognition from senior management that could lead to a promotion, then the latter is doubly important. Associate yourself with a project group working on an issue critical to your organization's bottom line. No matter how much you contribute to the final effort, you will be remembered for your participation, and senior management will remember you when promotions are being handed

out, if they are. There are very few opportunities for advancement in today's lean organizations.

Tell Me More

You can add to your chance for promotion by taking charge of a project of your own making. Again, select a solution to a problem that is impeding department or organization progress toward a goal, or an opportunity that will enable your department or organization to come closer to that goal or, better yet, to achieve it.

All that is left is making your project a success. Once the work is completed, assuming it has the impact you expected, you are more likely to get the attention of senior management you want.

10.7 How can I ensure that ethics and integrity aren't just values listed on a sheet of paper?

You need to consider values like ethics and integrity like goals critical to your organization's success. More important, you need to translate those values into behaviors—your own and those of your employees. This makes them more than words strung together, particularly if you incorporate the behaviors tied to the values into performance evaluations.

Since your employees won't practice

any of your company's values if they don't know why they are critical to their company's competitive advantage, you need to make that clear to them. Further, there need to be positive consequences for employees who pursue the values. Those employees who practice the behaviors that support the corporate values need acknowledgement. If possible, promotions, raises, and bonuses should be tied to the practice of values.

Here are some specific steps you can take:

- Emphasize and discuss

ethics on a continuing basis.

- Consider ethics and integrity during planning.
- Identify areas that are conducive to unethical practices.
- Encourage reporting of unethical activity.

Tell Me More

Those who fail to practice the values set—executives, managers, and employees alike—should not be rewarded. All the effort in

communicating the values will mean little if in real terms they have negligible influence on how the organization behaves. After all, behavior doesn't change if employees don't see a benefit—a payoff.

Don't forget to role model the values your organization has set. Your employees won't support the values you promulgate if they don't see you doing so.

When it comes to the values of ethics and integrity, in particular, you should:

Emphasize and discuss ethics on a continuing basis. Guidelines for solving ethical problems contained in the ethics code can be helpful, but including specific rules and regulations to meet every situation is impossible. Thus a code is primarily symbolic, indicating the importance a company places on ethical conduct. To maximize symbolism of the ethics code, it should be displayed prominently on desks and walls. But even more important, it should be discussed and analyzed on a continuing basis. Whenever questions and decisions concerning finances, quality, safety, and

production are discussed, ethical considerations must be included.

Consider ethics and integrity during planning. Moral lapses occur when ethical views and concerns aren't part of the discussion. Any goal-setting sessions—corporate, divisional or departmental—should stress ethics and make very clear that achievement of the goals at the expense of ethics will not be tolerated. Further, efforts to achieve goals should be monitored to ensure that there are no ethical corners cut to reach the goals set. Be available to staff so they know they can discuss problems that arise without

fear of reprisal—and they aren't tempted to do wrong.

Identify areas that are conducive to unethical practices. We've seen recent examples. But there are other areas in which unethical activities could happen: customer communications, safety, performance assessments and terminations, to name a few. What about your organization?

Encourage reporting of unethical activity. If the report is proven true, then prompt action should be taken and the misconduct should be publicized for all to see. Little or no

action sends a message to others that you *really* don't take ethical conduct seriously, despite a well-written code of ethics. If an allegation is found to be overblown or a simple misunderstanding, the conclusion must be discussed with the individual who reported the perceived wrongdoing.

10.8 Do I have to suffer from all those interruptions during the day?

Reducing the number of interruptions often demands an adjustment in attitude; that is, you need to accept responsibility for controlling the interruptions in your work.

Admittedly, you won't be able to control them all. But there are ones that you can. For example, you can't control when someone calls you, but you can control whether or not to take the call. You may not be able to prevent people from popping into

your office, but you can influence how long they stay.

Consider taking these actions:

- Use voicemail to screen incoming calls.
- Establish quiet hours during which you accept only emergency calls.
- Tell those who call you regularly when you prefer to receive calls.
- Get through the social "small talk" as quickly as possible.

- Bring calls to a prompt close.

If most of your interruptions are from drop-in visitors, here are some steps to take:

- Close your door.
- Encourage the use of appointments rather than unscheduled visits.
- Stand up when someone comes in and remain standing while you talk.
- Rearrange your office furniture so you are not

facing the traffic flow.

- Encourage your staff members to save up several items and go over them all at one time.
- Be candid when someone asks, "Have a minute?"

Tell Me More

Let's look at some specific actions you can take. Let's begin by reviewing some steps you can take to minimize telephone interruptions:

Use voicemail to screen incoming

calls. Forward those calls that can be handled by others.

Establish quiet hours during which you accept only emergency calls.

Once again, rely on voicemail to free you to focus fully on your work. It may be a critical project that demands your attention, or it may just be your day-to-day work that would otherwise pile up if you allowed interruptions.

Tell those who call you regularly when you prefer to receive calls.

Most people will cooperate and try to call at the preferred times, especially if they realize the chances

are much better of actually getting you at that time.

Get through the social "small talk" as quickly as possible. Get right to the point and stay there.

Bring calls to a prompt close. Tell long-winded callers that you have a pressing appointment or deadline.

If most of your interruptions are from drop-in visitors, here are some steps to take:

Close your door. Regular quiet time will allow you to concentrate on tasks and accomplish a great deal in

a short time.

Encourage the use of appointments rather than unscheduled visits. Go to the other person's office if he or she must see you; you'll have more control of when to leave.

Stand up when someone comes in and remain standing while you talk. Visitors won't stay so long if you remain standing while they are in your office. Likewise, group meetings. Shorten the time spent by holding stand-up sessions in hallways, reception areas, and conference rooms.

Rearrange your office furniture so you are not facing the traffic flow. If you can avoid eye-contact with people passing by, you will block many casual interruptions.

Encourage your staff members to save up several items and go over them all at one time. Do this yourself, too. If everyone would simply bunch things together, the interruption problem would be cut in half almost immediately.

Be candid when someone asks, "Have a minute?" Learn to say no. Be quick to take time for critical issues, but be slow to respond to

trivial matters. Practice saying no, and, as important, learn to recognize when no is the "appropriate" answer. For instance, a customer's visit is never an interruption.

Record the nature of interruptions for several days. When do they occur? Are they telephone calls or drop-in visits? How long do they last? Who is involved? What are they about? How important are they? An interruption log is easy to keep and will offer amazing insights once you study the results. You are likely to see patterns.

Whatever the patterns you find, you

will be able to break your interruptions into definable problems and tackle them one at a time.

10.9 How can I eliminate procrastination?

The first step in overcoming procrastination is to identify its cause. If due to low self-esteem or a tough project, then prepare an action plan to deal with it. If fear of taking the wrong step is behind the procrastination, seek out others familiar with the work to discuss your ideas. Then you can pursue the project more confidently.

Some people can't focus on big projects unless small, insignificant work has been completed. If this is

the cause of the problem, often it is better to finish the small tasks as quickly as possible and then turn to the major project than to force yourself to work on the bigger, more important task.

Start the task very early in the workday. Tell your staff that you should not be disturbed while you are at work on the assignment. Since scheduled activities have a better chance of getting done, just scheduling when you will work on a project increases the chances of your completing it on time. When scheduling, don't forget to set a deadline. Put that deadline in writing

and post it where you will be constantly reminded about it. Even share your commitment with others so you will be further moved to get the work done.

Don't forget, either, to reward yourself when you have completed the task. If you think you might procrastinate over a task, determine what you should give yourself (e.g., special lunch, new clothes, an afternoon off) for completing it and follow through with the reward when the task is completed.

Tell Me More

People procrastinate for several reasons. Among them are:

Low self-esteem. Some people experience an internal conflict between others' expectations and their fears about meeting those expectations.

Overwhelming work. Sometimes tasks seem too difficult or time-consuming so we hold off working on them either in the hopes of having sufficient time later to do the work or out of intimidation about the amount of work entailed.

Poor prioritization. Important but

difficult tasks are put aside as we handle smaller, easier, or more enjoyable tasks. Often, doing this misleads us to think that we have accomplished something.

Fear of failure. Some managers prefer not to work on a project out of fear of making a mistake.

Figuring out why you are procrastinating can help you remove the cause and get on with your work. Here are some other ideas:

Break the work into subsets, which can be done over time. The work will also look less formidable this way,

and it will be easier to complete the job without having to affect other assignments.

You might want to just get started. The momentum then will carry you forward. Identify one simple thing—something that can be done quickly and easily and does not require conscious effort. It may be as simple as sharpening a pencil, putting a piece of paper into a typewriter, or turning on the personal computer in your office.

10.10 How do I determine what to do first?

List all those tasks you need to do and prioritize them according to one or more of the following criteria:

- Which jobs and deadlines are mandated from above? These are important assignments, but not always urgent. On the other hand, if your manager is pacing up and down in front of your desk waiting for an action file, you should go get it, even though it may take you

away momentarily from an assignment that is both urgent and important.

Taking care of the problem gets rid of the distraction and will free you to focus on that urgent, important work needing your attention.

- Which jobs, if not done soon, might create bottlenecks in your area or impede the work of departments that you serve? As a general rule, these assignments fall into the category of urgent *and* important (if not to you,

to others).

- Which jobs will have a major impact on your reputation with either internal or external customers? These jobs are important. Ask for details to determine if they are also urgent.
- Which tasks can be postponed or rejected? Neither important nor urgent, these tasks can be shelved until later. There are routine tasks that often can be postponed until the next day.

- Which tasks can be delegated to employees and which ones should you do yourself? When you delegate tasks, you need to make sure that your employees know the priorities you have set for them and your reasons and expectations for the work's completion.

Tell Me More

Work delegated is more likely to be completed on time if your employees know its importance as well as the

timeframe for completion. Fail to do this, and you will wind up reprioritizing delegated work that your employees let slide and taking time away from your own duties to do the job yourself.

Where else can you get help? Besides your staff members (who have their own priorities to deal with), you have probably collected a few IOUs from peers who might be able to offer their help. Even if they're helping just because they don't want to be beholden to you indefinitely, help is help, and it should be accepted.

Besides prioritizing and delegating your daily workload, you should make it a practice to challenge deadlines. You will often find that externally imposed deadlines have more flexibility than you thought. For example, does your manager really need that report on Friday? If she won't read it over the weekend, asking to submit it on Monday will give you two extra days to edit and polish it.

How you request a deadline extension affects both your chances of getting it and the image you leave with your manager or another you ask for the extra time. State your

case positively, in a collaborative manner: "It would really help if we could wait a couple of days on this report to see what direction the market will take."

Finally, since situations are so fast changing, stay in touch with your manager and customers (internal and/or external) to determine their needs and adjust either the work you are doing for them or your plans to complete the assignments to reflect any changes.

10.11 How can I better organize my workspace to maximize my productivity?

Your goal is to keep the most accessible areas in your office, like your desk and middle shelves of your book case, least crowded, and the least accessible areas, like the very top and bottom shelves of your bookcase and lowest file drawers, most crowded.

Begin by creating an in-basket for mail and everything else that flows into your office: Don't let it grow

higher and higher. Set aside an hour or so each day to process the information in the in-basket. Sort it into three piles—material to discard, material to route, and material to keep. Throw the discard pile out. Send the route pile immediately on its way. Papers that you don't feel confident about discarding or routing—but that don't require immediate action—belong in the "someday" file for later reference.

Now get to work on the material you've kept. You should handle everything in the pile at one time. If you haven't enough time to do so today, focus on that correspondence

that demands immediate attention. Place that material that can wait until tomorrow in a file folder. Your goal should be to clear that file out by then, along with new important mail you receive. This same system can be adapted to the handling of e-mail.

Tell Me More

Books and magazines that you seldom use yet want to keep should be stored at the top and bottom of your bookcase. Place books, notebooks, and magazines to which you refer regularly on the second and third shelves where they will be

more accessible. If these shelves become crowded, rethink their position in your bookcase and your office. If others have need for some of these books or policies and procedures and other materials in binders, consider having a bookcase in your department that can serve as the department library, with materials there that all may refer to at one time or another.

What about paper—printed e-mails, reports, correspondence, and the like—that you want to keep? File them. To minimize filing, organize your folders by project name, and stuff the file folders with as many

papers as fit. This advice runs contrary to conventional teaching, but it makes good sense. There is less chance of misfiling, and there are fewer folders to handle when you retrieve or put papers away.

For that special document—the one that you always seem to need but can never find—set aside a special folder.

Tear out articles from magazines that you want to keep because they suggest ideas. Put them into a special "ideas" file. Keep course brochures and self-development plans that a manager needs in a

"self-development" file. And for any papers that you don't need but are reluctant to part with, put them into a "someday" file.

10.12 How can I build networking skills?

Conversing with perfect strangers is not easy. Even those known as outstanding networkers had to learn how. Their secret, they tell me, is preparation. Before you go to an event where you will have an opportunity to meet with people whom you don't know but whom you would like to know, you should think of two or three questions or comments to begin a conversation.

Tell Me More

If you are new to such meetings, ask the other person about such events. If you are talking to someone who has spoken at the meeting, express interest in his or her presentation and follow the compliment with a question. If you don't want to talk about the organization or speaker's presentation, ask about upcoming events or talk about the facility in which the meeting is being held.

Compliments always work, but so does honesty. If you feel uncomfortable walking up to a group of strangers in conversation, identify yourself and ask if you can join them, explaining that you have

promised to meet at least one or two new people during the meeting. It's amazing how effective this can be. These former strangers often will go out of their way to introduce you to others at the meeting they know.

Increasingly, organizations hold networking sessions for their members. But that isn't the only place to meet people. Here are other ways to meet people:

- Find opportunities for your professional colleagues and acquaintances to introduce you to their friends. Being a

friend of a friend is a quick way to establish rapport.

- Befriend successful people. Lending a hand without any intention of getting anything in return can prompt the person in need to return the favor later on. If the person is well-connected, that person might find a way to make you a member of his or her network.
- Extend yourself at trade shows, seminars, and professional meetings, assuming a leadership role if

needed. Potential network members will be impressed with your generosity and/or capability.

- Rethink your lifestyle. Find opportunities to meet more people. For instance, don't lunch with the same person over and over again. Invite new individuals to join or arrange group luncheons.

Building a network is an ongoing responsibility. Given the time and energy you will make to add members to your network, you want to keep your network healthy. To do

that:

Stay in touch. Don't just call or e-mail when you want something. Let the individual know that you are there to help with his or her needs. If you are asked for help, keep in mind that your kindness will be remembered when you have a favor to ask.

Remain trustworthy. Confidences shared should remain confidences. Promises made should be kept. One misstep, and you can wipe out an entire network.

Say "thank you." We get so

wrapped up in running our businesses that we forget to say these two simple words. Better yet, write a brief note that shows your appreciation. You can e-mail your thanks but somehow a handwritten note says it so much better.

Be upbeat. We all have bad days, and there may be members of your network to whom you can share your troubles, but don't make all your communications negative or "me-focused."

10.13 What can I do if I expect termination?

If you are unsure about your position with your company, it's time to update your resume. Rewrite it to play up your accomplishments. If you need two pages, use them—recruiters no longer believe that everything should be communicated in a single page. List yourself with Web career sites as well as search firms. Since companies use keywords—job jargon—when reviewing job listings on the web, write your cover letter and resume with those in mind before listing

yourself at a career site.

Tailor each resume and cover letter to the specific opening or situation you are applying for. Also, mail letters to firms that you would like to work with. Be aware that only about 4 percent of unsolicited resumes are answered (but one of those answered could lead to a job). Even when the people who receive unsolicited letters don't answer, they often keep them on file. Companies would rather hire direct than pay a fee.

Tell Me More

Don't limit yourself to these avenues. Mention your interest in a new job to friends and family. Ask them to tell others of your interest. They may know about an opening that would interest you. Networking should include contacts on lists from professional associations or colleges attended as well.

Whether you are still employed or have already been terminated, you should ask yourself whether you want to continue to do what you have done or whether you would prefer to change careers. The problem with this approach is that you may discover, once you have

made a career move, that it isn't really what you wanted after all. A better approach is to ask yourself, "What do I do well?" Market yourself accordingly, focusing on your strengths. If you have past experience in the field, you may find a job sooner.

10.14 What should I do to improve my relationships with my superiors?

A supervisor is a supervisor—neither a buddy nor a close confidant. You may work closely together, but that doesn't guarantee you will become friends. With some managers, the best you can hope for is treatment with professional respect. It doesn't hurt, however, if you don't give your manager reason to dislike you. If you are unfortunate enough to have a selfish, immature, or just inept manager, as everyone has had at one time or another, it is still to your

professional and personal advantage to afford your manager a level of respect.

To build high regard from your manager, you need to learn not to respond to every slight and even to go out of your way to defend your manager's position when it makes sense. Such behavior will position yourself well professionally with your manager. Others will come to learn about you from him as well.

Consequently, your name will come to the mind of either your manager or others in senior management when career opportunities come up. Good managers know which

employees to keep in the background and which ones to trust and therefore recommend for promotion. Those with presence, people skills, and strong interpersonal skills are repeatedly tapped because they have proven they know what to do as well as what not to do.

10.15 How can I make traveling less stressful?

Don't underestimate your travel time so you are always in a rush to get to your location. By then, you will be stressed out, unfit to carry out your responsibilities at your destination. You also don't want to be stressed out upon your return, so allow some extra time at your destination to catch your breath after the meeting.

During business travel, instead of eating a huge, fattening meal that will keep you up all night, have a light dinner and restful sleep. If there are

plane delays, retreat to an airline club and make phone calls, read a report, or watch television. Once on a plane or train, take some time to stretch your feet. Long trips won't seem as grueling if you get a little exercise while you are en route. Do some isometric exercises in your seat. Start with your toes, curling and uncurling them. Next, use the palms of your hands to massage the balls of your feet and your heels. Roll your shoulders forward and backward. Getting your circulation and muscles moving will make the trip more tolerable, and you will experience less jet lag at the other

end.

Tell Me More

To make the traveling more manageable, pack smart. That means you should pack as light as possible. Decide what you will need and limit the clothes you carry to two to three outfits. Pick one primary color, like blue or black, so that a minimum of accessories will be needed. For trips involving lengthy travel time, wear comfortable clothes in route—comfortable, not shabby. You never know whom you will meet on the plane. If you travel

frequently between the same cities, it may be clients or coworkers.

Keep an emergency first-aid kit in your briefcase, with remedies for upset stomach, headache, indigestion, a cold, or a cough. If you are traveling overseas, bring any medicines you take regularly in the original pill containers with prescription labels on them. Include a list of all the medications you take in the event of a medical emergency.

So far so good, but unexpected things can happen. So the day before you leave, confirm appointments via e-mail or

telephone. On the morning you leave, reconfirm flight time. With such follow-up, 99 percent of scheduled meetings happen as planned. What about the home office? Don't be a nuisance, calling many times a day. At most, check back with your office twice a day. Most situations can wait until you get back home.

If a problem arises back home, stay calm. Don't get into an argument with someone over the phone. Do damage control, and then wait until you get back to the office to effect a long-term solution.

10.16 How can I start working from home?

Anyone who is considering working at home has to recognize a reality: In the office, the whole workplace conspires to help you do your work. When you're at home, it is just the opposite. Everything conspires against you. All of a sudden everyone wants a bit of your time, taking you away from your tasks. Family and friends—and sometimes you yourself—find it hard to take your work plans seriously.

Tell Me More

To minimize conflicts, it is wise to sit down with the family and make decisions about the time that will be needed to carry out work and the time remaining for family needs. Declaring unilaterally that you will work from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. can cause a lot of conflict.

Working at home also demands that the parent adjust his or her own work style. Distraction and procrastination, if problems for you, will need to be addressed if you are to work at home. Identify your optimum work style. For instance, you may work best in short bursts of activity, whereas trying for long

sustained work goes against your nature. Under these circumstances, you might want to organize your work day to have numerous subprojects so you can shift from one task of thirty minutes to another of twenty-five minutes and so on through the day. Over time, the full projects will be completed.

An alternative approach is to organize the workload by day. So you would immerse yourself in work one day, working straight through lunch to complete a major project, and then, on another day, you could visit clients, make phone calls and send off e-mails, organize files, and

complete all those other small tasks
associated with work.

10.17 What kind of handshake makes the best impression?

In the United States, the handshake is the meeting/greeting ritual. And many managers place a lot of emphasis on it. We allow impressions based on the handshake and the rituals that surround it to determine future business relationship.

Don't extend your hand to another unless you gauge by eye contact the individual's willingness to shake hands. Don't extend your hand

unless the person seems happy to see you. Sometimes, a person is too preoccupied to extend his or her hand. Once presence is established with a warm greeting, then you can extend your hand. Initiating the handshake is the sign of a true professional. If you are in your office and you wait for the other party to initiate the handshake, you risk being seen as timid and unsure of yourself.

When you are visiting another, of course, you wait until that person offers his or her hand. After all, this person is the host. If a handshake is not forthcoming immediately, hold out your hand. Never allow an

important meeting to start without a handshake.

Tell Me More

The handshake itself should match palm to palm. Pressure should also match. If you receive a firm handshake, grip with the same firmness. If you receive a handshake with light pressure, don't squeeze too hard. Cultural differences or health issues may prevent the person from extending a firmer handshake.

When shaking hands, do a mental 1-

2-3 count. At 3, drop the hand. Don't pump up and down more than once. Don't sandwich the other person's hand between both of yours. It suggests that you are trying to overpower, to patronize, or to claim the higher status. Don't bone-crush or wimp out with only half of the hand. It doesn't matter whether you are shaking a man's or a woman's hand. From a business etiquette perspective, it is as appropriate for a man to offer his hand to a woman as it is for her to offer her hand to him. Gender isn't a consideration.

Some women are uncomfortable shaking another woman's hand.

Either they will nod to each other or they will hug one another. But in business, a firm handshake is the appropriate greeting.

10.18 Would dating a colleague have a negative impact on my career?

Generally, in smaller firms, office romances are tolerated. It is due to the more casual environment of such firms. But larger companies covertly (or very overtly) discourage romance between employees—in particular, those between managers and their staff. If your company has a clear "no fraternizing" policy, then you and the other employee risk immediate dismissal if the company finds out.

Since a rule that threatens

termination for fraternization is difficult to enforce, most companies don't have such a policy—just an attitude throughout the organization that frowns on such relationships.

If the romance involves two single people, and they behave professionally throughout, including after a civilized parting if the relationship goes sour, then being the butt of office gossip during the romance may be the worst consequence you encounter. On the other hand, if an employee dates a married person and the situation becomes public, invariably one or both parties are usually asked to

leave. There is a belief that those who might be disloyal to a spouse might also be disloyal to the organization and consequently can't be trusted. Certainly, when the indiscretion becomes public, reputations are tarnished and the professional stature of the individuals is permanently damaged. Rumor mongering will cut into office performance. There is also the danger of domestic violence—a wronged spouse angrily entering an office making accusations and threatening harm.

Tell Me More

If you do decide to date an individual in your organization, don't confide in anyone within the organization. At least wait until after the first date and you and the other party see an ongoing relationship in your future.

Invariably, information about your romance will become common knowledge. If so, be comfortable with it. Try to maintain the same attitude and demeanor as before. Don't send personal e-mails. Avoid making goo-goo eyes at your lover. Don't let yourself be seen staring into space, daydreaming, and wasting time. Minimize impact on your work and on others. The more

professional you are around your significant other, the more quickly others will accept the relationship.

If you and your partner believe that the relationship will be permanent, you may want to share the information with your manager. In doing so, you will appear straightforward, honest and professional. Your manager won't be taken by surprise when he or she hears about you both on the grapevine. If you can demonstrate to your boss that your relationship isn't interfering with your work performance, you will also get his or her respect. On the other hand, your

manager may be more alert to your behavior. Don't expect to be allowed to travel together on a business trip. A long lunch hour, tardiness in the morning, and early exits may raise eyebrows. If there's important work to do, your manager may take action to have you moved to another position because he or she feels that the romance will put unnecessary stress on the task. He or she may even fire you.

If the relationship ends, you also have to deal with the aftermath—and watchful eyes of peers. Indeed, probably the most important reason managers decide not to pursue a

relationship is because of the ramifications of a breakup and not because they don't see the potential for a good romance.

So before you pursue a romantic relationship with a coworker, determine if the affair has the potential to create mutual happiness and some level of commitment. If it doesn't, then the risk is probably too great. Better to seek a social life outside your office.

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